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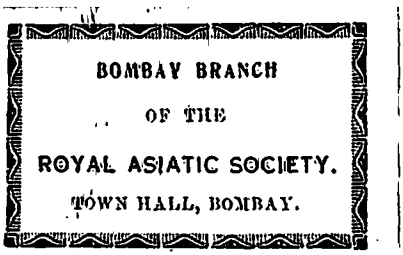

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LECTURE

ON THE

HISTORY OF FRA

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

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29549

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.

CAMBRIDGE: J. DEIGHTON; AND MACMILLAN AND

00029549

LONDON:
SPOTTISWOODES and SHAW,
New-street-Square.

CONTENTS

OF

THE SECOND VOLUME.

Page

LECTURE XIII.

On the Sources and Management of the Revenues of France 1

LECTURE XIV.

On the Power of the Purse in France - - - 29

LECTURE XV.

On the Reformation and the Wars of Religion - - 77

LECTURE XVI.

On the Reformation and the Wars of Religion - - 114

LECTURE XVII.

On the Power of the Pen in France - - - - 153

LECTUREX VIII.

On the Power of the Pen in France - - - - 208

LECTURE XIX.

On the Power of the Pen in France - - - - 244

Page

LECTURE XX.

On the Absolute Monarchy as administered by Henry IV. and by Richelieu - - - - - - 293

LECTURE XXI.

On the Absolute Monarchy during the Minority of Louis XIV. 326

LECTURE XXII.

On the Absolute Monarchy as administered by Colbert and Louvois - - - - - - - - 359

LECTURE XXIII.

On the Absolute Monarchy as administered by Louis XIV. in Person - - - - - - - - 416

LECTURE XXIV.

The Growth of the French and the English Monarchies compared - - - - - - - - 461

ERRATA.

Vol. II., page 3. line 21. for "Vents" read "Ventes."
Expunge the marks of quotation in pages 165, 166, and 167.

LECTURES.

LECTURE XIII.

ON THE SOURCES AND MANAGEMENT OF THE REVENUES OF FRANCE.

When, in June, 1787, Louis XVI. required the Parliament of Paris to register his edict for raising a revenue by stamps, that body, assisted by the Dukes and Peers of France, resolved, that the right of imposing taxes on the people belonged to the States General, and to them alone; and that the parliaments were not competent to sanction any fiscal ordinances. How then did it happen that the Power of the Purse, which the theory of the French constitution thus ascribed to the national representatives, never yielded, in that kingdom, its legitimate fruit of constitutional freedom? The present and the following lecture will be devoted to the investigation of that problem. I must, however, approach it by what, I fear, may seem a circuitous and a wearisome path.

The revenue of the kings of France may be considered as having been either ordinary or extraordinary.

Under the head of ordinary revenue, may be comprised all the possessions, or proprietary rights, which each monarch in his turn inherited;—1st, as seigneur of the royal domain;—2ndly, as supreme suzerain of the realm; and,—3rdly, as administrator of the central government. Under the head of extraordinary revenue, will consequently be included only the produce of such imposts, direct or indirect, as were levied upon the people, or upon any class of them, under positive enactments. Proposing this as a methodical and convenient, rather than as an exact and logical, arrangement of the subject, I proceed, in pursuance of it, to inquire, what were the component parts of the ordinary revenue of the French kings? and, first, what were their possessions, or proprietary rights, *as seigneurs of the royal domain?*

In the days of Hugues Capet and of his earliest successors, the royal domain was but a convertible term for that great fief (the Duchy of France) which he had inherited from his ancestors. But, by the conquest and cession of various other fiefs, the domain was progressively enlarged, until at length it embraced by far the greater part of the kingdom of France. Some provinces, however (Dauphiné, for example), were re-united to the Crown without being annexed to the domain.

As seigneurs of the royal domain the French kings might, in the language of our own law, be said to have been seised of various corporeal and incorporeal hereditaments within its precincts. That is, they were owners in possession of extensive lands, buildings, forests, and navigable streams situate there; and they were entitled to the feudal dues arising in each of the signeuries within the same limits. Those dues, though differing in many fiefs, had a great general similitude in all.

The nature and the amount of such dues depended on the rank of the vassal of whom they were claimed. If he were noble, he owed to the royal seigneur a *Relief*, or *Droit de Quint*, on every change in the ownership of his fief. During his minority, the king was entitled to the guardianship of his estate and person, and, therefore, to what was called the *Droit de Garde*. In some seigneuries the noble vassals also rendered to the king, as their feudal lord, an annual tribute on their forest lands, varying from year to year with the estimated produce of the forests.

Every bishop and abbot, whose church was within the royal domain, paid, on his appointment, a *Régale;* that is, a tribute to the king, corresponding with the *Relief*, or *Droit de Quint*, payable on the change of ownership in a noble lay fief.

An ignoble vassal or roturier, holding lands within the royal domain, owed to the king as his seigneur, 1st, a personal *Cens*, or capitation tax; 2ndly, an annual *Cens*, or quit-rent on his land; 3rdly, *Lods et Vents*, that is, a fine on every change of ownership; 4thly, *Corvées*, that is, the performance of manual labour on the public roads and works of the seigneurie during a certain number of days in each year; 5thly, the obligation of grinding his corn at the mill, and of baking his bread at the oven, of his royal seigneur, and not elsewhere; 6thly, fees for licences to authorise his marrying, or hunting, or fishing; 7thly, the *Droit de Gîte*, that is, the duty of supplying board and lodging to the king and to his suite while on a royal progress; and, 8thly, the *Droit de Prise*, or the duty of supplying to the king on credit, during a certain period, such articles of domestic consumption as might be required for the royal household.

The revenues of the king, as seigneur of the royal domain, differed from those of his great feudatories, not in kind but in amount. His receipts were greater than any of theirs, in the proportion in which his fief exceeded in extent and value any of their fiefs.

The preceding statements will demand material qualifications as we descend the stream of history. Some of the most oppressive of the privileges of the royal seigneur had fallen into disuse before the accession of the House of Valois. Some of them had been expressly abolished; and, in some cases, those charges on the land which varied with its changing value, had been commuted into fixed money payments.

It was a general principle of law, that the reigning sovereign had not an absolute property in the royal domain, but was merely entitled to the usufruct of it; and that it was therefore inalienable. Nevertheless, in process of time, it was greatly diminished by apanages to the younger members of the royal house—by gratuitous donations to other persons—by sales to purchasers—and by mortgages to creditors. In every page of the financial history of France we meet with the record of strenuous efforts to arrest this evil. The judges omitted no opportunity of inculcating the doctrine, that all gifts and conveyances of crown estates were invalid. The States General, when solicited by the king for money, never failed to call on him to resume the patrimony of his crown from those to whom it had been improvidently given or illegally sold. Nor were such resumptions infrequently made. But it was impossible so to set aside conveyances of any part of the royal domain, when effected for valuable considerations, without entirely depreciating all future sales of any similar property. It became necessary, therefore, in order to restore the con-

fidence of purchasers, to guarantee them by royal ordinances against any such breach of the public faith; and thus, at length, the crown lands were sold under conditions so stringent, that neither Sully nor Colbert were able to struggle successfully against the pressure of them. Such was the extent of those sales, that, in the reign of Louis XIV., the royal domain no longer ranked among the chief of the fiscal resources of the state.

Secondly. *As supreme suzerains of the realm*, the kings of France derived various proprietary rights from that principle of the feudal law which bound together all the successive titles to a fief in an unbroken chain of dependencies, descending from the king himself, through all the intermediate seigneurs, down to the lowest of their sub-feudatories. An unauthorised change in the tenure of any such fief might be prejudicial to the king, considered as the last and highest of the feudal lords, in the series ascending above the author of the innovation. He by whom any such injurious act was done was, therefore, said *abréger son fief.*

Now, a fief might be so *abrégé* by granting it to the Church in mortmain; for such a grant would extinguish the fines which, if it had remained in lay hands, would have been payable on alienations, or on the deaths of each successive tenant. This was the ground, or the pretext, for a long series of ordinances regulating, restraining, or prohibiting grants in mortmain to ecclesiastical corporations, whether sole or aggregate. The effect of those laws was, at length, entirely to interdict to every seigneur in the realm the granting of any fief in that manner, except with the express licence of the king as supreme suzerain. For such licences the king demanded large

dues, which collectively were called the *Droit d'Amortissement.*

In virtue of the same principle, the king, as supreme suzerain, acquired what was called the *Droit de Franc Fief;* that is, the right to exact dues on every transfer of a fief from a noble to an ignoble tenant. In support of this claim it was maintained that, by such a transfer, a fief was *abrégé*, because there was at least a legal presumption that the new owner, a roturier, would be less competent than the preceding owner, a noble, to perform the obligations on which the fief was holden. The real and the better reason was, that to which I referred in a former lecture. To facilitate the sales of seigniorial estates during the fever of the Crusades, it had been decided that, by acquiring a noble fief, a roturier was himself ennobled. The king's licence for such an acquisition was consequently indispensable; since, otherwise, the privileges of nobility might, without his consent, have been conferred on any one or more of his subjects. For every such consent he was accustomed to demand a fine, varying from three years' purchase to one year's purchase of the fief.

It was on the same principle that the kings of France, as supreme suzerains, became entitled to the *Droit d'Aubain;* that is, the right to succeed to the estate, moveable or immoveable, of any alien dying within the realm. I had formerly occasion to remark that, under the first two dynasties, laws were not local but personal. A stranger was, therefore, not entitled to the rights enjoyed by the denizens of the place to which he came; and in any such place he had no means of effectually asserting the rights which he was supposed to bring with him. He, therefore, sought for himself, and for his property, some power-

ful protector. In every feudal seigneurie the lord claimed the privilege of affording that protection, and of affording it on his own terms. He therefore rescued the stranger from the oppression of others; but it was in order to render him a prey and a bondsman to himself. Against such wrongs the sufferer could find redress only by avowing himself to be the liegeman of the king; and the king was ever ready to acknowledge that relation. Gradually, and after many a struggle, it was thus at length established, that all *aubains* in France were *royal* vassals, and were *not* in vassalage to the inferior lord within whose seigneurie they might be living. The financial consequence of this doctrine has already been noticed. Until towards the end of the 18th century, the French kings still retained, and carried into effect, this absurd and inhospitable pretension.

I do not pause to notice other minor sources of revenue, such as escheats and treasure-trove, to which the king was entitled, as what was called *le souverain fieffeux*. They are of importance only as indicating the progress which, by the aid of feudal doctrines, was continually made in the subjection of the seigniorial to the royal fisc. But,

Thirdly. The kings of France had many prerogatives and many consequent pecuniary rights, neither as members, nor as the heads, of the feudal hierarchy, but *as administrators of the central government.*

Thus, the *Droit de joyeux Avénement* was the right of each successive monarch, on his accession, to a tribute for confirming in his privileges every person in possession of any special advantages in virtue of any royal grants. Amongst such persons were all bodies corporate, whether commercial or municipal—all na-

turalised aliens,—all legitimated bastards,—and all holders of public offices.

The Crown was also entitled to the *Droit de Maîtrise*. This was a charge payable by every one who, after having served his apprenticeship in any commercial guild or brotherhood, sought to become a master workman in it on his own account. Nor were these formal or trifling dues. An ordinance of the year 1687 fixed, at 3000 livres, the *Maîtrise* payable by any man on his admission to trade as a Draper. In the case of a Druggist, the same ordinance assessed the charge at a sum varying from 5000 to 6000 livres. Dispensations from serving the appenticeship at all might also be obtained; and, in such cases, the tariff was higher still.

The *Droit de Greffe* was the right of selling various offices connected with the custody of judicial records or notarial acts. This was an ancient privilege of the French kings, and became the basis of a series of remarkable encroachments. First, they asserted the right to sell other public offices of far higher importance. Then they created offices for the express purpose of selling them. Then, in the absence of voluntary purchasers, they selected persons of wealth, who were constrained to buy this royal merchandise at a fixed price. But in all cases, until the reign of Henry IV., the office was made redeemable at a sum which was ascertained either by an express, or by an implied, condition in the original contract.

Against this fatal abuse, the States General, the Parliament of Paris, and the most eminent statesmen and writers of France (Montesquieu is the eminent and singular exception), never ceased to remonstrate with all the weight of their authority or their reason. But, till the eve of the Revolution, that abuse proved

inveterate and incurable. In the time of Louis XIV. the number of vendible, and for the most part superfluous, places exceeded 4000, and the prices of some of them were enormous. Towards the close of the 17th century, half a million of livres was exacted for each of the offices of secretary of state, of captain of the royal guards, and of first gentleman of the royal chamber. The office of great chamberlain was sold for more than twice that sum. In the catalogue of marketable employments we find more than 1900 seats in the different parliaments and other royal tribunals. These were for wealthy and ambitious purchasers. To the less aspiring were offered the offices of comptrollers of the royal butter, tasters of the royal cheese, inspectors of the royal piggeries, and so on. Nor were these bad investments of money. The ministers, councillors, and judges, if ignoble, acquired, in virtue of their purchases, most of the privileges, and all the immunities, of the Noblesse. The guardians of the palate and digestion of their sovereign also acquired an exemption from the burdens and indignities to which other roturiers were subject: such as the performance of *corvées*, the payment of *tailles*, and the lodging of soldiers in their houses. Eventually, as we shall hereafter see, the greater part of these vendible offices in the courts of justice became hereditary in the families of the purchasers, on the condition of the payment of an income tax usually known as the *Paulette*.

As administrator of the central government, the king of France also derived a large revenue from the control which he exercised over the coinage. Under the early Capetians, indeed, every great feudatory struck and issued money of his own for circulation within his own fief. But this power was gradually

taken from them and transferred to the Crown by a series of ordinances, commencing with the reign of Louis IX., and terminating with that of Charles VIII. In virtue of this prerogative the king received, on all new coins, a seigniorage, which represented, and which was supposed to correspond with, the cost of fabricating them. In the days of St. Louis that supposition was probably well founded; for, in later days, his management of the royal mint was always appealed to as the equitable standard for the observance of his successors. Those popular reclamations were, however, long ineffectual. To call in the outstanding specie, and to issue it again of a debased quality, but at the old nominal value, was one of the common resources of the treasury at all periods of great national distress. It was adopted in the disastrous reigns of John and of Charles VI., and amidst those calamities which overcast the evening of the life of Louis XIV. It was employed, without any such apology, by Philippe le Bel, so recklessly as to earn for him the sobriquet of Philip the Forger. Nor were these dishonest acts declined by our own Henry V. during his temporary administration of the government of France. Thus the seigniorage properly due on gold and silver money was a legitimate, though not a very important, method of recruiting the royal revenue. But the changes of the intrinsic worth of that money, which were made under the shelter of that prerogative, were at once amongst the most scandalous, and the most lucrative, of the means by which the treasury was replenished.

Fourthly. I pass on to the consideration of the extraordinary revenues of the French kings. These were composed of the proceeds of the taxes levied under the authority of fiscal ordinances.

Direct taxes, that is, the exaction of pecuniary payments for the support of the royal fisc, originated, first, in those services, military or servile, which the vassals, noble or ignoble, owed to their feudal lords and, secondly, in their obligations to offer a certain tribute to him on the marriage of the lord's eldest daughter, and on the admission of his eldest son to the dignity of knighthood. All these burdens were, in process of time, commuted for money payments or *tailles*, and such *tailles* were voted, as occasion required, by the court or parliament of the Fief. The municipal vassals enjoyed, under their charters, the double privilege of granting or refusing such imposts at their pleasure, and of being exempt from the liability to make such grants at all beyond the limits of a certain prescribed maximum.

The *tailles* thus drawn by the seigneurs from their vassals within their respective seigneuries, were also drawn by the king from his vassals within the royal domain. It was not till the 12th century that, in order to promote objects of common interest to the nation at large, he ever received or demanded such a tribute from all the provinces of the kingdom. It was then raised by the intervention and ministry of the great feudatories, and of their respective feudal courts. They imposed, and received, and paid over to the king what was thenceforward called the royal *taille*, in contradistinction from the seigniorial *taille*.

Philippe le Bel (as I formerly had occasion to observe) was the author of another and more momentous innovation. He first raised a royal taille, under the authority of grants made, or supposed to be made, by the representatives of the Noblesse, the Clergy, and the Commons. That practice (as we have seen) afterwards became common and even

habitual. But it was comparatively unusual to convene for this purpose the States General of the whole kingdom. The more frequent habit was to summon separately the States either of Langue d'oïl, or of Langue d'oc, or of the particular provinces.

In the origin of this system, the States, whether general or provincial, were accustomed to collect, by officers of their own appointment, the supplies which they granted for the service of the Crown. Nine deputies, that is, three from each of the three orders, were constituted superintendents. Subordinate to them were commissioners and receivers-general for the different provinces; and other officers called *Elus*, who apportioned the charge among the cities, communes, parishes, and individuals, liable to it. The *Elus* were so called, because they were elected by the contributors.

In the reigns of Charles V. and of Charles VII., however, all these appointments were superseded by royal nominations, except indeed that, in what were called the *Pays d'Etats*, the *Elus* still retained their independent origin and powers. The *Pays d'Etats* were composed of those provinces in which the old provincial States were still accustomed to assemble. The rest of France was divided into what were called *Pays d'Election*.

The *taille* was a tax imposed at once *in rem* and *in personam;* that is, each contributor was rendered personally liable to pay a sum proportionate to the estimated value of his immoveable property. It was not, however, levied equally in all places. All free cities (as we have already noticed) enjoyed a peculiar immunity as to the amount of this impost. Many cities, and some rural districts, were permitted to purchase a permanent and total exemption from it. In the

reigns of the sons of Henry II. such sales were especially numerous. Neither was the *taille* levied equally on all persons. The nobles were free from it, partly because it was originally a tax paid to them, and not by them;—partly because they (as it was alleged) rendered personally, in the field, the services from which their vassals were discharged by the payment of this tax;—and partly because, to engage in any kind of commerce, would have worked a forfeiture of their rank; and yet, without such commercial dealings, they could not acquire the money necessary for acquitting themselves of such a liability. The clergy were also exempt, not only because they too were unable to enter into any trade, but chiefly on account of the privilege which they enjoyed, and on account of the duty which they invariably performed, of imposing on themselves their share of the public burdens of the state. The members of the sovereign courts, as a new though inferior noblesse, and the officers of the Crown, on account of the dignity of their employer, participated in this valuable privilege. The result was, that the *taille* was a property-tax affecting the *roturiers* exclusively. During long ages they bore this burden with an impatience which exhibited itself sometimes in indignant expostulations; sometimes in bitter jests or satirical songs; often in tumults and seditions, and always in that estrangement between the privileged and unprivileged classes, which was destined, in the fulness of time, to overwhelm all the privileges and all the institutions of the monarchy in one common ruin.

The *Capitation* tax was another direct impost, which originated in the wars and financial embarrassments of the reign of Louis XIV. It was designed to afford an impressive contrast to the aristocratic injustice of

the *taille*. For the purpose of this impost, the people of France were divided into twenty-two classes; in the first of which stood alone the dauphin and the other princes of the blood. From the rate at which they were assessed, to the rate which attached to the smallest contributors, the scale descended by regular gradations, through each successive class; the rich paying according to their wealth, and the poor according to their poverty. But between this equitable theory and the actual practice there was a wide distinction. The clergy were permitted to purchase an entire exemption from this burden on easy terms. The noblesse were permitted to choose assessors for themselves from their own body. The *Pays d'Etats* were allowed to commute the tax for a fixed contribution. The burden thus fell, as usual, with the heaviest pressure on the roturiers, and on the *Pays d'Election;* that is, on the persons and on the places which were unprotected by any peculiar franchises.

The *Dixiéme* was, in substance, identical with the income-tax, with which we are ourselves so familiar; the rate being the same as with us, during the later years of the last war. It was payable on incomes of every kind; and it affected alike all classes of society, not excepting even the members of the royal house. The people of France at first cheerfully endured it as a burden necessary for enabling Louis XIV. to repel the threatened humiliations of Gertruydenberg. When that danger had passed away, incomes derived from land were relieved from this burden. In its altered form and diminished range it became, like all other direct taxes in France, a charge from which the privileged orders were, to a great extent, permitted to withdraw.

In addition to the direct imposts, which were thus

payable by the contributors in money, there were others which were levied on them indirectly; that is, in the form of duties on articles of general consumption.

Aides (a word for which the expression, "duties of excise," is the best equivalent in our own fiscal vocabulary) were first inflicted on the French people in consequence of the iniquitous wars and invasions of Edward III. They had, indeed, been paid before that time in particular fiefs and during brief periods; but thenceforward they became both permanent and universal. The States General of 1355 extended them to the sales of every description of merchandise.

The constitutional jealousy of the States and of the people of France, even when most wakeful on other subjects, slumbered strangely when their kings assumed the right to impose taxes, not on the persons, but on the property, of their people. Their acquiescence in the assertion and exercise of so dangerous a prerogative is best explained by the aristocratic contempt in which merchants and their pursuits were so long held amongst them, and by the consequent aristocratic habit of regarding trade as a matter which might be abandoned, without anxiety or inconvenience, to the absolute authority and regulation of the Crown. In this, however, as in all other respects, the *Pays d'Etats* seem to have been in advance of the rest of the kingdom. They habitually, if not invariably, maintained the practice of sanctioning, by votes of the provincial States, every imposition of *aides* within their respective provinces.

There were, of course, great variations from time to time, both as to the rates at which the *aides* were payable, and as to the articles on which they were charged; but in general it may be said, that wine and other liquors were the chief or only commodities

on the *retail* of which such taxes were imposed; other goods being assessed for this purpose only when sold by *wholesale*, and then at a much lower rate ad valorem.

The *aides* were almost invariably leased out to farmers; and the granting of such leases was a source of lucrative patronage to the Crown, and of grievous oppression to the people: for, even in the collection of these indirect duties, the spirit of privilege and exclusion was not altogether dormant. It was in a manner peculiar to themselves that the clergy and nobles paid them on merchandise purchased for their own consumption; and the inhabitants of particular districts were allowed to purchase a permanent exemption from them.

The *Douanes*, or revenue of customs, originated in France on political, rather than on fiscal or commercial, grounds. The great feudatories were accustomed to forbid the removal, from their respective fiefs, of wine, corn, or any other of the necessary articles of life, until they were satisfied that a supply existed within those precincts adequate to the wants of the inhabitants. Whatever they regarded as in excess of those wants they permitted the owners to export; requiring, however, that in every such case the exporter should be furnished with a licence, for which he paid such a price as the seigneur saw fit to exact. In imitation, though on a larger scale, of this example, the kings of France interdicted the removal, from the kingdom itself, of any raw or manufactured produce, except by their own special authority. The price paid, whether for the seigniorial or for the royal licence, constituted in reality, though not in name, duties of export.

In process of time that name, *les Droits d'Exporta-*

tion, followed the substance and defined it. Export duties were then distinguished into four classes. These were, 1st, the *Droit de Haut-passage;* that is, the payments due for licences to export goods beyond the realm;—2ndly, the *Droit de Rêve;* that is, the per centage payable on goods bought for exportation by any alien;—3rdly, the *Droit d'Imposition foraine*, which was in fact an enhancement of the two former demands to meet certain occasional exigencies; and,—4thly, the *Droit de Domaine foraine;* which was first imposed by Henry II. in substitution for the three former, and which differed from a modern tariff of export duties, in nothing except, first, that it applied not to all the realm, but only to the greater part of it; and except, secondly, that it applied not to a few only, but to all of the articles which could be exported thence.

Duties of import, *Droits d'Importation*, were of much later introduction in France. Till the 16th century there was little or no domestic industry demanding protection, or capable of receiving it. But, in the reigns of Henry II. and Henry III., the import duties were established by royal ordinances, which fixed such imposts on almost all articles, at the same uniform rate of two per cent. ad valorem. What I have further to state, on this subject of Douanes, will, however, be best reserved till we reach the administrations of Sully and of Colbert.

The *Octrois* were originally duties which, by the permission of the seigneur, any city was accustomed to collect on liquors and some other goods, brought within its precincts for the consumption of the inhabitants. What was thus paid was, at first, appropriated to the civic expenditure. Afterwards, the king authorised the imposition of octrois, to enable

the municipalities the more easily to raise the *aides* necessary for his own service. In still later times, Charles IX. himself imposed a tax on all wines brought into any fortified places, with the design, as it seems, of substituting that local charge for the yet more unpopular *taille*. The imposts levied at the city gate having thus ceased to be exclusively a civic fund, either in their origin or in their use, the way was opened for that final innovation of which Emeri, one of the superintendants of finance during the minority of Louis XIV., was the author. By an ordinance of that period the octrois throughout France were made payable to the royal treasury; and, to indemnify the citizens for the loss, they were authorised to impose on themselves similar duties of equal amount, as a provision for their own local charges. When we shall have advanced to the time of Colbert's ministry, it will be necessary to recur to this subject, and to explain the sequel of this invasion of the privileges and the property of the Bourgeois of the kingdom.

The *Droit de Timbre*, or stamp duties, formed, in the 16th century, a part of the annual budget of every French minister of finance. They were imposed on bills of exchange, on paper, cards, dice, gold and silver plate, and wrought iron.

The *Gabelle*, in the modern, and more contracted, use of the term, was the duty on salt, which seems to have provoked more frequent commotions, and a more bitter resentment, than any other article in the long catalogue of the fiscal burdens of the people. The salt-mines and marshes of France were originally wrought by licences from the seigneurs of the fiefs in which they were situate; but, in the 14th century, all the salt gathered in any part of the royal domain was made the subject of a royal monopoly. Under the superintendence of crown officers were established

depôts, where alone that article could be sold by those who had collected it, or purchased by those who were desirous to consume it. The royal salt merchant paid the producers of salt according to a tariff, which was from time to time adjusted between them, by reference to the average prices at the retail markets. Another tariff determined the rate at which the consumer was to receive his supplies; but no one was allowed to exercise his own discretion as to the purchase or rejection of this commodity. Four times in each year every householder was compelled to buy as much salt as a third tariff determined to be the proper quantity, regard being had to the number, and to the ages, of the members of his family.

It is superfluous to point out the vexations and absurdities of such a system. To enhance them, the usual inequalities were maintained in the execution of it. The privileged orders were permitted to supply their own domestic wants by deducting what was requisite for that purpose from the produce of their own salt-mines or marshes. In various provinces total or partial exemptions from the gabelle were established; and the charge was consequently rendered at once more oppressive and more invidious in those places in which the weight of it was entirely unmitigated. It was, nevertheless, too lucrative an impost to be abandoned, even by the most equitable and magnanimous of the statesmen of France under the old monarchy. Sully, Richelieu, Colbert, and many others, introduced or attempted various modifications of the system; but it remained to the last a grinding and offensive monopoly of one of the absolute necessaries of human existence.

In 1664 another article was subjected to similar restrictions; and, though they affected no small pro-

portion of the whole people, I am aware of no proof that, in this instance, any serious discontent, or even any grave remonstrances, were ever provoked by the demand. By a sort of universal consent, in which even the consumers of tobacco themselves acquiesce, the legislator of every civilised country is encouraged to subject it to duties of the highest possible amount, which will really produce the highest possible revenue. For this purpose the importation of it into France was entirely prohibited, except at a few specified ports. When imported there, it was received into the stores of the government, and the privilege of retailing it was then sold to the farmers-general, for the benefit of the treasury. The indigenous growth of tobacco was forbidden; not, indeed, absolutely, but in all cases in which the cultivator did not observe various restraints and precautions designed for the prevention of the contraband trade.

In the preceding enumeration of the sources of the revenue of the French kings, I, of course, have not attempted to include them all, but only such of them as were the most productive, or such as are most frequently mentioned by the French historians. It was not, however, from any of the ways and means already noticed, that a king of France was accustomed to provide for the most importunate wants of his exchequer. To meet the greater casualties of war, and not seldom to provide for the luxuries and extravagance of his court and household, he raised loans at his pleasure, to whatever extent he could procure them, on the pledge either of the whole or of any particular branches of his revenue. This is not the proper occasion to refer to the calamities which resulted from the habitual use and abuse of the public credit. But it may be convenient to observe that the *Rentes sur*

l'Hôtel de Ville, of which we so constantly read, were the dividends which, by the terms of any such contract, were payable at the Hôtel de Ville either of Paris or of any other city. That locality was chosen for the convenience of the rich citizens, and as an additional inducement to them to lend their money. But the term does not necessarily imply that the Rentes were to be discharged out of civic funds, or even by civic officers; although on some occasions, and to a certain extent, those funds might be pledged, and those officers employed, for that purpose.

To this very imperfect summary of the elements of the public revenue in France, I proceed to add a still more imperfect statement of the methods by which it was collected, expended, and audited. That unavoidable imperfection will not however, I trust, in either case, defeat my immediate object; which is merely that of elucidating several passages in the history of that kingdom, which must always be obscure to those who have not a general acquaintance with, at least, the outline of these financial and fiscal arrangements.

Under the Capetian dynasty the earliest administrators of the finances of the Crown were the great chamberlain and the other high officers of the royal household. To them succeeded the baillis and the prévôts, who, within their respective jurisdictions, were not only judges in all revenue cases, but also receivers, paymasters, and administrators of the produce of all dues and imposts owing to the king. The baillis and prévôts were themselves accountable to the royal council, or to the committee of that body which ultimately acquired the distinctive title of the Chambre des Comptes.

As in many other respects, so in this, St. Louis was at once an original, an enlightened, and a cautious

reformer. By him was given the first example of an effectual separation of the judicial and the financial departments from each other. His measure, indeed, applied only to the city of Paris; but it afforded at once the principle, and the precedent, for similar innovations in the other parts of the royal domain. His successors, in imitation of it, gradually but completely excluded the baillis and prévôts from all direct intervention in the receipt or expenditure of the public money, and committed that duty to a new class of officers called Receivers.

Still further to centralise the fiscal economy of France, Philippe le Bel created a new ministry. At the head of it he placed an officer of high rank, entitled the Superintendant General of Finance; and, in subordination to him, he appointed other officers designated as Treasurers.

In the time of Charles V. there appear to have been only three such treasurers. Of these one was stationary at Paris, while the other two migrated throughout the different provinces, which, at that time, were embraced within the royal domain. In those circuits they investigated the conduct, examined into the contracts, and inspected the books, of the various local receivers, and of all other persons through whose hands the public money passed.

The treasurers rendered their own accounts to the Chambre des Comptes.

The Chambre des Comptes had much in common with the Parliament of Paris, which, to a certain extent, participated in its functions. But the concord of those bodies was not much promoted by the kind of partnership which thus existed between them. The Parliament regarded the powers of the Chambre des Comptes with constant jealousy, and habitually endeavoured to abridge them.

The Chambre des Comptes, on the other hand, asserted for themselves the attribute of judicial sovereignty; that is, they maintained that their judgments in fiscal suits, or prosecutions, could neither be reversed, amended, nor reviewed, by any other tribunal. The Parliament denied to them this privilege, and insisted that they were themselves entitled to receive appeals from any such judgments. This dispute was at length settled by Charles VI. in favour of the Chambre des Comptes, and against the Parliament. Again, however, arose a contest between them respecting the revision of the sentences of the subordinate financial officers or judges; either court claiming an exclusive authority to receive appeals from such sentences; and again the pretensions of the Chambre des Comptes were supported by the king. Yet it was impossible to draw with a firm hand every part of the line defining the respective provinces of the two courts. The interests of the public revenue were so intimately blended with the interests of other branches of the public administration, that the members of each tribunal often met in the same place, and deliberated and acted in common upon questions falling at once within the appropriate provinces of each of them. There were also occasions when such of the members of the Chambre des Comptes as were in holy orders abdicated their places to lay members of the Parliament; as when a public accountant was to be tried for a crime which might induce a capital punishment.

In those provinces which, though re-united to the Crown, did not form a part of the royal domain, there were separate Chambres des Comptes, and from their adjudications an appeal might be brought to the Chambre des Comptes at Paris.

In the 15th century, however, the jurisdiction of

that chamber was materially abridged. Till then, like our own Court of Exchequer, it had been at once an office for auditing the public accounts and a tribunal for deciding all *contentious* cases affecting the revenue of the Crown. The incongruity of these functions was sooner perceived and more frankly acknowledged in France than in England, and to obviate the inconveniences of it another committee of the royal council was constituted, with the title of the *Cour des Aides*. To the Chambres des Comptes were reserved its ancient administrative functions, the judicial duties of that chamber being transferred to the new committee.

The Cour des Aides was declared by Charles VII. to be sovereign, in the sense in which I have already explained that expression. The difficulty, however, of finding an exact line of demarcation between the attributes of the different chambers was rather increased than diminished by this enlargement of their number. The Chambre des Comptes continually objected, that the Cour des Aides were taking cognisance of questions really administrative, and in name only judicial. The Parliament were not less prompt to object, that the Cour des Aides took cognisance of cases as involving a fiscal accountability to the Crown, which really fell within their own jurisdiction, as involving a breach of the general penal law. How completely these controversies refused the solution of any precise and definite rules, may be inferred from an ordinance of Francis II., of the year 1559, which directs that "*les causes connexes*" should be "*traitées par les deux cours fraternellement et aimiablement.*"

It would be a great error to draw from the preceding statements the inference that, as early as the 14th and 15th centuries, the fiscal administration of

France had been reduced into a comprehensive, a well adjusted, or a regular system. Of the regulations to which I have adverted, few were in force beyond the precincts of the royal domain. In each of the provinces not within those precincts there were laws, or customs, more or less peculiar to itself, for regulating the receipt and expenditure of the public money, and the audit of the public accounts. With the increase of the national resources in the 16th century, came a proportionate increase of the pecuniary embarrassments of the court and of the burdens of the people; and, in the train of those burdens, came so rapid a succession, and so great a variety, of schemes for the management of the royal revenue, that it would be idle to attempt to compress, within the time at my disposal, any intelligible account of them. I must confine myself to a brief notice of such of those changes as it is most necessary to understand, with a view to the correct apprehension of the history of France.

1st. Then; in the reign of Charles VII., the proceeds of the royal domain were all made payable into the hands of one of the treasurers, who thenceforward acquired the title of *Changeurs du Trésor*. The proceeds of the whole revenue of imposts were at the same time made payable to an officer designated as the *Receiver-general*.

2ndly. Francis I. added to the two last-mentioned officers a third of the same general description, who was entitled the *Trésorier de l'Epargne*, to whom were made payable all the proceeds of what was collectively called the casual revenue.

3rdly. It was not till long after the 16th century that any approach was made in France to the national system of establishing a consolidated fund of

the whole income of the Crown, from which to defray the whole of the public expenditure. Each particular branch of the revenue was, at that time, appropriated to particular charges. Consequently, the Changeurs du Trésor, the Receiver-general, and the Trésorier de l'Epargne, each applied his receipts in satisfaction of those particular demands for which each was separately responsible.

4thly. But the Trésorier de l'Epargne soon greatly surpassed his two colleagues in the comparative importance of his functions. He became the keeper of a chest into which the joint receipts of himself, of the Changeurs du Trésor, and of the Receiver-general were all accumulated, though not all blended, together. Such was the importance of his office, that Francis I., the author of it, expressly enacted that it should never be vendible.

5thly. To the same monarch was owing the division of that part of France which was called the Pays d'Election into sixteen districts, called *Généralités*. They were so called because each constituted a financial department of *Recettes Générales*, at the head of each of which was placed a receiver-general. To each receiver-general were made payable, in the first instance, the proceeds arising within his *généralité* from the revenue of the royal domain, from the revenue of imports, and from the casual revenue.

6thly. Henry II. attached to each *généralité* a treasurer-general for the assistance, and a comptroller-general for the supervision, of the receiver-general.

7thly. Henry III. established at Paris a financial council, called the *Bureau Central des Finances*. It was composed of two treasurers, and of two receivers-general. In each *généralité* he created similar offices.

These institutions, though, probably, at first established for much more extensive purposes, do not appear to have been entrusted with any real power in the administration of the revenue. They seem, rather, to have been called into existence by the jealousy with which, in that disastrous reign, the king regarded all the ministers of his own authority, and to have been employed chiefly or exclusively as inspectors and checks upon the malversations of other officers of finance.

8thly. The *Chambre des Comptes*, amidst all these vicissitudes, retained the general audit of the public accounts. But Francis I. invented, and his successors continued, a device by which that audit was rendered ineffectual in respect of any money which it was the pleasure of the king himself to spend for his own personal gratification, or, as it was expressed, for his *menus plaisirs*. For such issues the public accountant acquitted himself, by producing to the court a simple order or cheque for the money, under the royal sign manual. Such orders acquired the name, so ill-omened in French history, of *Ordonnances de Comptant.*

The subsequent changes in the financial institutions of France will be most conveniently noticed when we reach the administrations of Sully, of Richelieu, and of Colbert. The preceding retrospect of the methods by which the revenue of the French kings was raised, received, expended, and audited in earlier times, tedious as it may have been, will yet, I trust, derive some interest from the light which it will throw on the subject to which I propose to direct your attention when we shall next meet. I shall then endeavour briefly to indicate the chief passages in the financial history of France, in the hope that they will conduct

us to the solution of the question which I proposed at the commencement of this lecture—the question, that is, How did it happen that the Power of the Purse, which the theory of the French constitution ascribed to the national representatives, never yielded in France its legitimate fruit of constitutional freedom?

LECTURE XIV.

ON THE POWER OF THE PURSE IN FRANCE.

THE rapid sketch which I laid before you when we met last, of the sources and of the management of the revenue of the kings of France, will now enable me to advance to a review, not less abridged, of some of the more remarkable incidents in the financial history of that country; after which I hope to make intelligible my answer to our proposed inquiry, "Why the growth of the Monarchical Despotism was not arrested by that Power of the Purse, which in theory at least belonged to the Seigniorial Courts and to the States General."

When Hugues Capet ascended the throne, and converted his vast hereditary estates from a mere fief or county into the domain of the Crown, and into the only independent source of the royal revenue, the exigencies of his times and of his position constrained him to alienate no inconsiderable part of it in favour

of his more powerful vassals. He forbade his successors to imitate his own example. But necessity overcame the remembrance, or the authority, of this prohibition. Like himself, each of his early descendants transmitted to his heir the royal domain shorn and narrowed by grants of very inconvenient magnitude.

The early Capetian kings, impoverished by these donations, were compelled to apply to their greater feudatories, or tenants in capite, for aid to meet the indispensable exigencies of the public service. On such occasions each lord convened the feudal court or assembly of his vassals. Having ascertained what was the amount of the funds required from them to meet the demand, they apportioned that amount among all the persons, and the estates, within the seigneurie, which were liable to contribute to it. Such tailles, raised by means of such assemblies, constituted the only extraordinary resource of the earlier kings of the race of Hugues Capet in any war which his own ordinary resources were inadequate to support.

When Louis le Gros conferred charters of emancipation on the Communes in the duchy of France, those kings for the first time acquired a regular revenue, not measured by, nor dependent on, the legal obligations either of their immediate or of their more remote vassals. Within those communes the citizens, by the terms of their charters, became liable to equip and maintain a militia for the king's service in his wars, or to pay to him an annual tribute in money.

The pecuniary wants of the royal government increased with its increasing strength. They were especially augmented by the heavy charges which the public treasury incurred for the support of the

Crusades. It, therefore, became necessary to explore new financial resources; and, under the pressure of such difficulties, Louis VII., for the first time, hazarded the imposition, by his own authority, of a tax of one-tenth of the estimated income of every free layman in France. The apology for this great usurpation was found in the sanctity of the object in view. It was to defray the expense of the expedition of Louis to the Holy Land. The complaints were general and vehement; but, for a time, they were silenced by the supposed piety of the motives of the royal innovator. In that faith the people submitted to the burden, and a considerable sum was collected.

Such a precedent could not of course long remain unfruitful. Accordingly, Philippe Auguste imposed on his subjects what was called the Saladin Tithe; that is, an annual tax of the tenth of every man's income, to be applied to the deliverance of Jerusalem from the power of Saladin. Warned, however, by the clamours which the impost of Louis VII. had excited, Philippe Auguste obtained, from an assembly of prelates and barons, their sanction for this tribute. During the first year it was paid with a reluctant acquiescence; but, when the demand was repeated, the resistance of the people at large became so stern and resolute, that even that powerful monarch was constrained to prohibit the further collection of the Saladin Tithe.

This disappointment induced him to devise a new and less invidious source of revenue. I refer to the exaction of money from the Jews. Strange as it may sound to ourselves, this henceforth became a regular and important part of the ways and means of the royal exchequer. In that age, as it has been often observed, a Jew was a kind of sponge, continually

imbibing a rich moisture, to be as continually wrung out by the rapacious grasp of power. The Venetians, the Genoese, and the Pisans had, at this time, the entire conduct of navigation, as the Lombards had an exclusive enjoyment of commerce. But the Jews maintained an absolute and undisputed possession of the money-market. Their consciences were not affected by the denunciations of usury by the Church; and the law which forbad their acquiring land drove them to invest their property in whatever other forms were most easily portable. The risks attendant on the loan of such property occasioned, and even justified, the enormous rates of interest which they demanded. To diminish that risk, it was their custom to admit some needy but powerful patron into a partnership in their profits; and the king, who depended on them for advances of money on the credit of his future revenue, was secretly well pleased that, in their dealings with others, they should obtain advantages which, in their dealings with himself, enabled them to assist him with the greater facility and on the easier terms.

In that ignorant age, the Jews and the Lombards were alone possessed of the arts of arithmetic and book-keeping. They thus became, in most European countries, the managers of the public revenue. From their real or supposed abuses of this power came into use the word *mal-tolte*, so frequent in French history, —a word compounded, according to the Latinity of the times, of the two words, *mala* and *tolta*. What they thus usuriously gained, they held, of course, on the most precarious tenure; and to escape, as far as possible, the exactions to which they were exposed by the cupidity of the king and the bigotry of the people, the Jews became the inventors of commercial bills of

exchange—a device which enabled them to withdraw their funds out of any country without the hazard of the transmission of specie, and without the necessity of their own personal appearance within the jurisdiction of their royal oppressors.

Thus the Jewish people formed a secret monetary league, the ramifications of which extended throughout the whole of Christendom, and which was covertly and indirectly favoured by all the sovereign princes of Europe. Defenceless by the law, hated for their religion, and envied for their wealth, they yet, by the strength of that confederacy, became the universal bankers of the civilised world. They endured and baffled all varieties of torture, indignity, exile, and massacre; and proved that commerce, as well as religion, may thrive upon persecution.

From the fiscal tyranny of the whole of the royal line to which he bore the relation either of heir or of ancestor, St. Louis presents a memorable exception. Six measures signalise his reign. 1. The one step which he took for increasing the ordinary revenue of the Crown was that of reserving to himself the Droit d'Amortissement—that is, the right, when land was conveyed to any ecclesiastical body, sole or aggregate, to be compensated, by an annual money payment, for the loss of those feudal dues which, if the land had remained in lay hands, would have been payable on each alienation of it, or on the deaths of all the successive tenants. 2. Instead of preventing the frauds of the receivers of the royal revenue by burning Jews, St. Louis established for that purpose those tribunals, which were afterwards called the Chambres des Comptes. 3. To relieve his people from the oppressions of those great feudatories who possessed the droit régalien of coining money, he

obtained their concurrence in an edict which not only fixed a common standard for all coins, whether issued from the royal or from the seigniorial mints, but which authorised him to punish all offences committed against the coinage laws in any part of the kingdom. 4. For the defence of the contributors to the royal or seigniorial tailles, he forbade the imposition of any burden of that nature, until after an assembly of the vassals of the fief, on which it was to be levied, had been held, to deliberate, not only on the grant itself, but on all the details of the measure. 5. He required that, within the domain of the Crown, the contributors to every such tax should freely choose nominees, from whom his own officers were to select such as were best qualified to make an equitable apportionment of the charge among the persons and the lands liable to it. 6. It had been customary for the feudal lords to prevent the export or import of grain, or other commodities, beyond the frontiers of their seigneuries, except by persons willing to purchase licences for the purpose; and, by issuing such licences in favour of particular traders only, the seigneurs converted this trade into an oppressive and lucrative monopoly. St. Louis forbade this practice, and required every seigneur to lay out, on the repair or defence of the public roads, the produce of all the tolls levied on goods, or on passengers, traversing them. Humble cares these, if contrasted with some of those which have excited the enthusiasm of historians and the applause of nations! —prosaic virtues, perhaps, when drawn into comparison with the superhuman achievements so liberally ascribed to the real or imaginary heroes of the Roman calendar—yet cares such as, in the 13th century, could have engaged no ordinary intellect, and virtues

surely to be preferred to the most sublime prodigies of self-conquering asceticism.

To Philippe le Hardi, the son and successor of St. Louis, is due, as a financier, the single credit of having invented a new source of revenue, in the sale of letters patent of nobility.

Philippe le Bel improved on this invention. He sold not only such patents, but, with them, the privilege of exemption from all public taxes in future—an anticipation of the revenues of the Crown which, in the long catalogue of the desperate plunges of financiers in distress, is hardly to be rivalled for unthrift. But to have been thus the author of an exemption eventually so fatal to his country and his race, was not the single, nor even the most scandalous, of the devices to which Philippe le Bel is indebted for the conspicuous, though inglorious, place which belongs to him in the financial history of France.

First, the prerogative of altering, at his pleasure, the standard of the coin of the realm, which St. Louis had taken from his barons and repudiated for himself, was exercised by Philippe le Bel without decency and without restraint. His resort to this iniquitous method of raising money may be traced in the Ordonnances des Rois de France throughout almost every year of his reign. When he had large payments to make, he decreased the weight and fineness of the specie. When he had large payments to receive, he augmented both. He thus habitually provided for the public service, and for his own selfish expenditure, by a flagrant and undisguised robbery; and though even then sarcasm and ridicule had begun to exercise in France some part of that mighty power to which they afterwards attained there, yet the so-

briquet of Philippe le faux Monnoyeur, which he earned from his people, has come down to us only as a record of their ineffectual indignation.

Of Philip's contest with Boniface VIII. — of his consequent convention of procureurs, or syndics, of the cities to meet the prelates and barons of the realm — of his assembling the deputies of all those three orders — of the imposts which followed on the dissolution of the last of those meetings — on the insurrections which followed — and on the various provincial charters, and especially the Charte aux Normans, by which at length those disturbances were allayed — I briefly touched when addressing you on the subject of the States General in the 14th century.

It remains to observe that, in the progress of the controversy, Philip discovered a mode of imposing on his people a burden, and of securing for himself and his successors a source of wealth, of far higher importance than those duties on the sale of merchandise, which had so vehemently provoked the public indignation.

In the indistinctness which, in that age, hung over the limits of the royal authority, it was assumed by Philip, and was generally admitted by his subjects, that the regulation of trade was a royal prerogative, the limits of which no one could define, and with the exercise of which no one could properly interfere. The king, therefore, published an ordinance prohibiting the exportation from France of any goods, whether raw or manufactured. Having established this general rule, he proceeded to sell licences for dispensing with it in particular cases. A large income was thus easily raised; and thus was gradually, though imperceptibly, established a real, though not an avowed, tariff of export duties of customs; for

the customs were nothing more than the substitution of a fixed sum, payable on all exported goods by any person whatever, for the fluctuating sums demanded on licences for specific exportations by particular persons. And to this modification of the rule, or practice, another still more momentous addition was to be ultimately made by virtue of the same prerogative. Licences were required for importing, as well as for exporting, goods; and the sale of such licences at a fixed price was precisely the same thing as the exaction of duties of import.

The financial policy of Philippe le Bel was adopted by Louis X. He also attempted to raise money by debasing the coin, and by imposing ad valorem taxes on the sale of merchandise. But the French people had now learnt the efficacy of an armed resistance to fiscal extortion. They compelled Louis to recede from his attempt. They exacted from him a pledge that he would never resume it; and they demanded and obtained the public execution of Marigny, the superintendant of finances, to satiate the popular revenge, and to admonish all future financiers of the danger of provoking it.

Louis X. was, however, but an inapt scholar in the great art of conciliating his people. He did not, indeed, attempt to revive the ad valorem duties, but with a perverse ingenuity endeavoured to raise money by the sale of judicial offices. The impolicy and unpopularity of the measure were enhanced by the disingenuous, or rather by the false, pretexts under which it was taken. The offices of the judges could not be sold until they had first been vacated. It was resolved, therefore, to expel the actual holders of them from the bench. With that view the king appointed commissioners charged to inquire into

their judicial conduct. It was a device by which no one was blinded; and as one royal judge after another was removed on the report of this royal inquest, all who heard it knew that they were really removed, not for any fault of theirs, but only that their seats might be transferred to the highest bidder for the succession.

The wants of the Crown were, however, insatiable. To supply them Louis X., with characteristic duplicity, resorted to another artifice, the success of which curiously illustrates a great truth—the truth, I mean, that, in the distribution of her favours, Fame is at least as capricious as Fortune, and still more unjust; and especially so when she awards the laurel of philanthropy.

The want of money, and the determination to raise it by hypocritical pretences when other means were unavailing, have procured for Louis no vulgar place amongst the benefactors of mankind. The abolition of slavery is the ground on which immortal renown is claimed (and claimed, in some cases, on very doubtful or slender grounds) for not a few of those who have flourished as philanthropists in our own times. In Louis X. of France, they had a predecessor in that work, and a partaker in that glory, whom, however, they would probably have been very reluctant to acknowledge as an associate in their labours, or in their reputation.

He enacted a law for the emancipation of all slaves within the domain of the kings of France. It is impossible to read this ordinance without admiring the unbroken continuity of character and of style—the indication of character—which has prevailed amongst the legislators of France during the last five centuries. Who would doubt that the following enactment was a quotation from one of the paper constitutions which have been ratified by as many

constituent assemblies in the same country since the year 1789? "Since" (it begins), "according to the law of nature, all men ought to be free; we, considering that our kingdom is called and named France, and desiring that the fact may coincide with the word, and that all Frenchmen may be free men, do ordain that throughout our realm the servile condition do give place to the state of liberty." Braver words could not be wished. But, to reach the true sense of them, some other aid is necessary than that of the dictionary. In order to carry the law into effect, Louis nominated a body of commissioners; and to those commissioners he gave instructions, which still remain as the most luminous commentary on the ordinance itself.

In France, as in Rome, every slave was permitted to acquire a peculium—the amount of which seems, however, to have been limited either by custom or by law. The commissioners of Louis were to ascertain what was the amount of the peculium of every slave. They were to insist on that amount being paid by each as the price of his emancipation. If the slave belonged to the king himself, the whole price was to be paid into the royal treasury. If he belonged to any seigneur holding of the king, the commissioners were to deduct, for the benefit of the seigneur, as much of the money as would fairly represent the loss which he would sustain by the enfranchisement. Similar laws appear to have been made in imitation of this in the fiefs of the greater feudatories. Slavery was in this manner abolished, not indeed at the expense of the royal treasury as with us, but at the expense of the slaves themselves. The end which was thus accomplished was, indeed, so inestimable, as to reconcile us to the want of munificence, of justice, and

even of sincerity, in the means adopted for the purpose. If a wiser man than Louis X. had then governed France, or if the pecuniary necessities of Louis had been less, the land might have yet had to endure the curse of slavery through many succeeding years. It is not always to the wise, or to the good, that society is indebted for the greatest social improvements.

Philip the Long inherited the wants of his brother and predecessor Louis X., but wrestled with them in a bolder and more generous spirit. He began by the suppression of improvident pensions, and by the revocation of ill-judged grants of the royal domain; a measure which, as might have been anticipated, excited to an equal extent the resentment of the grantees, and the delight of the people at large. But on the people, as well as on the grantees, the financial ingenuity of Philip the Long pressed heavily. Many a generation was to pass away before their descendants were to cease to groan under the burden which he transmitted to them. His melancholy distinction as a financier is to have been the author of the gabelle, or salt tax. He imposed that impost without the concurrence of the States General; but, as it is conjectured, in substitution for some other duties which he remitted. This, however, is but an hypothetical explanation of the undoubted fact, that the tax was accepted without hostility, and endured with no apparent impatience. Perhaps this general submission may have been a tribute of the confidence reposed in Philip the Long by his subjects; for his memory is unblemished by the reproaches which attach to the names of his predecessors. He was animated by wise and patriotic purposes; and laboured with zeal, if not with any eminent success, to promote a wise economy and a faithful administration of the public treasury by his revenue officers.

Under the reign of Charles le Bel, the revenue of customs, which had originated in the time of Philippe le Bel, in the sale of licences for the exportation of goods, was first levied in the more direct form of export duties according to a settled tariff;—an absurd and suicidal impost; for it fell on all the main articles of primary necessity, such as grain, hay, cattle, leather, wine, salt, and herrings cured by French fishermen, and rendered the producers of such articles in France unable to compete, on equal terms, in any other country, with foreign productions of the same kind.

Nineteen years had now elapsed since the last convention of the States General of France. During all that time the royal power had been striving in vain to secure an adequate public revenue without recognising the right of the contributors themselves to grant or to withhold it. But, in the year 1332, Philip, the sixth of that name, and the first king of the unhappy House of Valois, was compelled by stern necessity to recur to that constitutional resource. The pretensions of Edward III. to the crown of France, though little supported or favoured by the people of that kingdom, had yet suggested the obvious policy of conciliating them; for, in England, maxims of government, entirely repugnant to those of the French Crown, had already taken deep root, and the claims of Edward might, therefore, be supported by a dangerous appeal to the example and the principles of his hereditary states. Philip accordingly summoned the prelates and barons of his realm, and, as it is said, the deputies of his good cities, to meet together at Paris. The assembly was propitiated at their meeting, as usual, by a sacrifice to public anger or prejudice. Pierre de Montigny, the superintendant of finance,

had acquired immense wealth, which contrasted invidiously with the wants of the public treasury. Whether justly or otherwise, he was supposed to have grown rich by the plunder of the public revenue, and died on the scaffold to gratify the vindictive jealousy provoked by his wealth and imputed crimes.

The progress of the arms of Edward, however, rendered it necessary to conciliate the public favour by sacrifices far more costly than the life of a superintendant of finance. In the year 1338 an ordinance was therefore promulgated by Philip, at the request of the barons, clergy, and commons, in which he declared that "the kings of France would thenceforward never levy any extraordinary tribute from the people, without the consent and grant of the Three Estates; and that each of his successors should swear, on his coronation, to the observance of this engagement." I infer, however, from the terms of the ordinance, that it referred not to the whole of France, but to Languedoïl only.

In deference to the authority of the best judges, I exclude the assemblies of 1332 and of 1338 from the catalogue of the States General of France. There is, I believe, no extant proof that either of them was an elected body; though persons assuming the character of deputies of the Tiers Etat appear to have been present at the first, if not at the second, of those conventions.

So unsettled were the ideas of mankind at that time, regarding the real nature and limits of the respective provinces of the different members of the legislature, that, almost immediately after the solemn pledge of the year 1338, Philip himself, without the consent of the States, or any reference to them, established custom houses and duties of customs in many parts of France, which till then had been exempt

from that burden. Yet this innovation does not appear to have been resented as a breach of faith, or even to have been regarded in that light. Apparently, the States abandoned to the king the regulation of commerce as a matter too insignificant to merit their own attention. The duties of customs were paid by the Lombards, and the nobles, clergy, and commons of France seem to have regarded royal exactions, of whatever amount, from those merchants with complacency, as transferring so much of the public burdens from the denizens to the foreigner. That the Lombards repaid themselves in enhanced prices, at the expense of the consumers, however familiar a conclusion to ourselves, seems not to have occurred to the political economists of that age.

Under the pressure of the wars with England, the conventions of the States General for financial purposes, became the frequent, and almost the habitual, resource of Philip of Valois. But he laboured to defeat their encroachments by dividing their power. He rarely, therefore, convoked the States of the whole realm collectively. At one time he summoned the Clergy, the Noblesse, or the Tiers Etat apart from each other; at another, the States of Languedoc or of Languedoïl only, and frequently the States of particular provinces alone. In all the different forms in which they were called together, these assemblies granted subsidies to the king. They consisted chiefly in ad valorem duties on the sales of merchandise, and especially of liquors.

The royal prerogative of regulating trade was meanwhile maintained and extended. In exercise of it Philip established that monopoly of salt to which I referred in my last lecture. It was a measure so universally distressing and distasteful, as at length to provoke an inquiry into the basis of the royal autho-

rity, real or supposed, in pursuance of which it had been taken. The States remonstrated with the king, and the king answered their complaints by the assurance, that the trade in salt should be free as soon as Edward should have retreated from France. To Edward the financial embarrassments of his rival afforded a ground for merriment, as well as for exultation. "He is, indeed," said the English king, "the inventor of the *Salic* law;" a play on words memorable partly as perhaps the only recorded jest of its celebrated author, and partly because it is so near akin to the sarcasm by which the Romans avenged themselves on the censor who introduced the salt tax among them, whom they punished with the title of Livius Salinator. At Rome, as at Paris, it was regarded as a kind of outrage on society to impose any such burden on the consumption of an article so indispensable to the health of man, and so widely diffused by the bounty of nature — an outrage to be expiated in France by ridicule when no other vengeance was to be had.

But even amongst that laughter-loving race, all mirth was for the moment extinguished by the gloom in which the sun of Philip of Valois was setting. His subjects were crushed beneath the weight of tailles, tithes, depreciations of the coin, forced loans, maltoltes, and continually increasing taxes. The battle of Crecy and the loss of Calais had been followed by famine, by pestilence, and by the yet more fearful scourge of hosts of undisciplined soldiers, who, roving over the land in armed bands, filled it with spoil, and outrage, and desolation.

In the midst of these calamities the crown descended to John. On a former occasion I intimated, as fully as the time at my disposal permitted, what was the progress of the financial and constitutional

struggle by which France was agitated during that unfortunate reign—during the regency of Charles V.—throughout the wars and the insanity of Charles VI.—under the usurpation of Henry V.—and amidst the triumphs of Charles VII. In reviewing the proceedings of the States General convened by those various monarchs, and by Louis XI., and during the minority of Charles VIII., I indicated the general progress of the financial history of France until the commencement of the Italian wars. My design was then, as it is at present, merely to draw an outline which might be filled up by your own studies and reflections. I proceed to the completion of it.

On the departure of Charles VIII. from France for the conquest of Naples he was compelled to make many costly sacrifices for securing his dominions from external enemies during his absence. He purchased that advantage by large territorial cessions to the empire and to Spain, and by large payments of money to England. To raise that money, and to defray the expenses of the armament destined for the conquest of Naples, he was compelled to borrow largely from the bankers of Genoa and Milan. Such however, as we learn from Philippe de Comines, was the difficulty of effecting those loans, that one of the Genoese merchants stipulated for interest on his money at the rate of 42 per cent. per annum. By the aid of those advances Charles first won his brilliant though momentary triumph, and then, by the irreparable exhaustion of them, he was compelled to allow the French garrisons of his Italian conquests to waste away in sickness, in misery, and in famine. He returned to France with the shattered relics of his gallant army, and with the profound conviction that a complete reform in his financial system was indispensable to the accomplishment of his dreams of

extended dominion. He had firmly resolved to effect such reformations, when death proved the fatal antagonist of this, as of so many other, wise and patriotic though tardy intentions. Charles bequeathed his good designs as a legacy to Louis XII. his successor.

Louis frankly accepted and faithfully discharged the obligation. In the long line of Capetian kings three only have earned, or merited, the praise of a self-denying economy of the public treasure, and they may all be said to have been elevated to the number of the Saints. They were Louis IX., who was canonised by the Church; Louis XVI., who was canonised by the compassion and esteem of the whole Christian world; and Louis XII., who may be said to have been canonised by his people, when they bestowed on him the glorious title of their Father. But they to whom public monuments are decreed in France must needs be distinguished from other men, not only by memorable achievements, but by memorable sayings also; and Louis XII. fulfilled each of these conditions of an enduring celebrity. It was his just and emphatic, though homely, boast, that, in his days, a poor man might safely let his poultry loose into his paddock. Anticipating Elizabeth of England in refusing a grant of money proffered by his subjects, he also anticipated her in the wise and kind remark, that the money would yield more fruit in their keeping than in his. In the same homely but honest spirit he was accustomed to say, that a good shepherd would always have fat sheep; and, in a more lofty strain, that he would rather make his courtiers laugh at his parsimony, than his people weep at his extravagance. Nor were these generous and warm-hearted phrases mere exercises of the wit of the royal speaker. They were the genuine interpretations of his habitual policy.

He commenced his reign by refusing to collect the Droit de joyeux Avènement. His troops were paid with so exact a punctuality, that he was able to punish severely, when he could not altogether repress, their customary exactions from their fellow subjects. Although the Noblesse claimed, and had exercised, the privilege of exemption from the aides or excise duties, on liquors sold and retailed by them on their own account, he compelled them to sustain that burden. Though retaining the gabelle or salt tax, he abolished the monopoly of the sale of salt. He remitted a third of the talliages; and, in the collection of the remaining two thirds, he effectually interdicted the abuses which the royal officers had been accustomed to practise with impunity for their own benefit. Haunted as he was with his predecessor's phantom of Italian conquests, he yet rejected, even in aid of that object, the vulgar expedient of taxation, and defrayed the expenses of that warfare by funds honestly borrowed on the security of the royal domain, and honestly repaid to the lenders of it.

Louis XII. was, perhaps, hardly entitled to the general character of an enlightened sovereign. But he enjoyed that degree of mental illumination which probity and singleness of heart will afford to the simplest. He had the capacity to devise, and the integrity to observe, a policy, both fiscal and political, by which his subjects were protected in the honest accumulation of wealth, and in the peaceful enjoyment of it. He was rewarded by their gratitude and benedictions. Without so much as a solitary addition to the public burdens, he enjoyed a revenue exceeding, in the proportion of three to one, that of the most affluent of the kings who preceded him. The number of his subjects, the splendour of his

cities, the agricultural produce of France, her maritime power, her commercial capital, and the profits of her trade, foreign and domestic, all rapidly increased during the reign of the Father of his people. They mourned his death with genuine lamentations, and transmitted to their children's children the memory of his virtues.

There is a strange fatality in the affairs of the world, by which the rulers of it not seldom sow a harvest of future disaster even by measures conceived in the most upright, humane, and philanthropic spirit. And so it was with some of the acts of Louis XII

Thus, for example, he required every public accountant, on his appointment to office, to deposit in the public treasury a sum of money as a security against his possible defaults. Nothing could have been either better designed, or more unfortunate. These preliminary deposits gradually passed into a price paid for the office; and thus the venality of public employments, one of the greatest of all abuses, resulted from the honest attempt to protect the revenue against abuse.

So again Louis XII., in the very spirit of Jeremy Bentham, had made the public revenue liable to the payment of all the expenses of civil actions. The burden proving enormous, he then ordained that each suitor should pay his own fees. Nothing more reasonable; but observe the result. In those days it was the fashion (I know not how else to express it) for a successful litigant in a lawsuit to present to the judge a box of sweetmeats; a mark of pleasant courtesy on the one side, and of good humoured condescension on the other. But when the royal edict was promulgated, expressly rendering the payment

of his judicial fees the legal obligation of every suitor, judicial commentators on that edict determined, first, that the box of sweetmeats was a fee; secondly, that the payment of it was no longer optional, but obligatory; thirdly, that it might be commuted for a money payment; and, finally, that the amount of the pecuniary remuneration might be assessed between the successful suitor and the judge, at whatever sum they might mutually consider reasonable. The effect of this reading of the new law was, that, in the highest tribunals of France, favourable judgments were openly and unavowedly purchased of the judges; and the word *épices* (by which the box of sweetmeats had been always known) acquired a conventional meaning synonymous with that of the word *bribe.*

In these and some other cases it must be admitted, that the integrity of Louis was not directed by a far-sighted prescience. He is one of the many rulers of the world who have demonstrated how easy it is to be at once a very honest man and a very unskilful legislator. His honesty, however, imparted to him the knowledge of many truths which are often hidden from the most sagacious monarchs; and among them the truth, that, in the government of a great nation, there can be no real patriotism without an habitual parsimony.

It was a truth not revealed to his more celebrated successor, Francis I. Affecting every species of glory to which the world renders an idolatrous homage, Francis accepted the worship of his flatterers, and repaid it by the spoliation of his subjects. His ambition aspired to attain, and his vanity was flattered by the assurance that he had actually attained, to the union in his own person of three characters, never

seen in perfect combination before; that, as a prince, he was the most powerful, as a cavalier, the most accomplished, and, as a patron, the most munificent, of all the heroes of his own generation. To sustain this threefold dignity, Francis surpassed all his predecessors in extravagance; creating public offices as mere articles of merchandise, and squandering the price of them with the most wanton profusion. Yet who shall dare to assume the prophetical office, unaided by actual inspiration? As some of the most upright measures of Louis XII. led the way to results which that patriotic prince would have most anxiously deprecated, so some of the most indefensible of the acts of Francis led to consequences, over which the Father of his people would have most cordially rejoiced.

I have already attempted to explain how the collection and management of the various branches of the royal revenue were, in those times, distributed between the superintendant of finance, the provincial collectors, the receivers-general, the farmers-general, the trésoriers de France, and the trésoriers de l'epargne. There was then no central treasury, no unity of principle, and no established system of disbursing, and accounting for, the proceeds of the various duties levied for the use of the Crown. No remedy could be more obvious, and none apparently more easy, than that of subordinating the receivers-general, and all their inferior officers, to one common head. But that reform alone, though it would have secured the revenue from the waste of so many distinct administrations of it, would have brought no immediate aid to the ever-necessitous Francis. Such aid might, however, be obtained by the creation and sale of ten new receiver-generalships; and to bring those

offices into the market to the best advantage, it was desirable to render their powers as extensive, and their emoluments as large, as possible. With this view, and apparently with no higher view, all the inferior collectors were subordinated to the receivers-general, and the receivers-general were themselves placed in subordination to the trésorier de l'epargne, who thus became the centre, and the regulator, of the whole financial system. Thus concentration was effected in that branch of the public service. Selfishness accomplished the work of public spirit. The new receivers-general acquired, by their money, the powers which ought to have been gratuitously imparted to their whole body, from a regard for the public interest.

Nor was this centralisation of the fiscal duties of the government the most important advantage of the creation and sale of the new offices. Until that time, respect had been practically shown to the ancient theory, which dedicated the *extraordinary* revenue of the royal domain to the public service, but placed the *ordinary* revenue of it at the absolute disposal of the king, according to his unfettered discretion. But that distinction was abandoned, both in practice and in theory, when the various sources of the royal income, being all made to flow through the same official channels of the receivers-general, were all brought under the control of the same superior officer, the trésorier de l'epargne. Thenceforward, the whole receipt of the treasury was equally charged with the defence and government of the nation. Thenceforward the parliament maintained that their ancient feudal control over the proceeds of the royal domain had, by this change, been virtually extended to the whole mass of the revenue with which those proceeds

had been thus inextricably consolidated. By the creation of ten new receiver-generalships, Francis had sought, and had obtained, a round sum of money. As an undesigned consequence of that innovation, he imparted unity and method to the financial system of France; he narrowed his own absolute dominion over his own revenue; and he enlarged the fiscal powers of the single body in the state, whose authority was, to any extent, a counterpoise of his own.

His other financial measures were equally contracted in their design, but were not equally beneficial in their consequences. Some of them merit particular notice.

First. As auditors of the public expenditure, the Chambre des Comptes had been accustomed to consider the public accountants as entitled to an acquittance for all money which they had paid over to the king, in order that the king himself might employ such moneys in the public service. The chamber held it indecorous, or unconstitutional, to inquire into the actual use made of such funds by the royal receiver of them. Availing himself of this courtly reserve, Francis became the inventor of that species of cheque, the mention of which so frequently occurs in French history, under the name of *Bons*. A Bon was an order addressed to the trésorier de l'epargne, under the royal sign manual, in the following brief and emphatic words:—"Bon pour mille (or any other number of) livres." Such orders were more accurately called "Acquits de Comptant," because, in the Chambre des Comptes, they were admitted as a valid acquittance of the accountant. Every one anticipates the result. To the objects of the royal favour, and to the ministers of the royal pleasures, Bons were distributed with reckless prodigality, and the funds

which should have supported the most important public services were thus irretrievably diverted to useless, or rather to injurious, purposes.

Secondly. To Francis is to be ascribed the unenviable distinction of having founded the national debt of France; for, in the annals of his reign, we meet for the first time with the rentiers on the Hôtel de Ville of Paris; a class of public creditors whose claims, even then, amounted to 60,000 livres per annum, payable out of the revenue which was collected in that city, and which was properly applicable, not to royal, but to civic purposes.

Thirdly. Francis was also the author of that enormous increase of the amount of the tailles to which popular resentment gave the name of *la grande Crue.*

Fourthly. To any one who has ever vexed his soul in hunting a point of law through our excise acts, it may be some consolation to be told, that the edicts of Francis were as copious as the statutes of George the Third, and much more original, in all the mysteries of cellar searchers, inventories, and permits.

Fifthly. Francis had the further credit or responsibility, of having rendered the gabelle as oppressive in practice as it was always absurd in theory.

Finally. He is one of the earliest of the protectionists known to modern history, and one of the most consistent. Not content to protect the silk fabrics of Lyons against Italian and Spanish weavers, and the groceries of France against the sweet products of other lands, he made laws to shelter French drugs against the medicines of the foreigner; a consequence of the doctrine of universal protection

for home-bred commodities, from which, I suppose, the sternest of its modern advocates would shrink.

To employ these cold financial tints in depicting Francis I. may seem a kind of profanation. In our popular histories he is the hero of the Renaissance. In those pages, arts, sciences, and literature revive under his auspices. There he is the indomitable antagonist of Charles V. He is sententious and sublime in the lowest depths of adversity. In an age of dull utilitarians and angry polemics, he is still a gallant troubadour, now breaking a lance with the bravest, and then doing knightly homage to the most beautiful. But when we turn, as turn we must, from this brilliant historical romance to our dry financial annals, the splendid mirage passes away, and nothing is left in sight but the sands of the desert — arid, barren, and unprofitable. The Paladin becomes an extortioner. The Mæcenas turns into a Sardanapalus, wringing funds from the miseries of his people to pamper dissolute women and effeminate courtiers; — revelling in selfish waste in the very centre of the distress which his own follies had created; — squandering on fêtes the funds denied to his half-starved armies; — imposing on his subjects burdens till then unheard of in their national history — and repaying their sacrifices by such disasters and defeats as that history had never before recorded.

The celebrity of Francis I. is the tribute rendered to him by the venal authors whom he honoured and maintained. But such celebrity is calamitous to every people amongst whom it is diffused. He really bequeathed to his subjects nothing better than the memory of wars waged during twenty-eight years to gratify a puerile and criminal ambition; — of two fruitless invasions of Italy; — of the destruction of

two gallant French armies in that vain enterprise;—of his own captivity and broken faith;—of the abandonment of Naples and the Milanese;—of the surrender to Spain of Flanders and Artois;—of the hostile invasion of his northern provinces;—of the insults offered by the invaders to his capital;—of a permanent national debt;—and of fiscal burdens exceeding eight fold the revenue which had enabled his immediate predecessor to maintain the kingdom in prosperity and in peace. Yet to this hour the illusions which surrounded the person of Francis in his own day, are thrown around his name by the popular literature of his native land; and each successive sovereign, or aspirant for the sovereignty of that too sensitive race, is thus, in his turn, admonished, that the single condition on which Frenchmen will accept the services, or pardon the offences, of any ruler, is that he shall govern them in such a manner as shall enhance the national self-esteem, and as shall satiate, on whatever terms, the national thirst for glory.

The faults of the four immediate successors of Francis have, therefore, received no such absolution as has been pronounced over his own. For their reigns were inglorious, from the commencement to their close, in whatever light they may be viewed; and are especially inglorious if we advert to their financial operations.

At the commencement of the reign of Henry II., Poitou, Guienne, Gascony, and five other less considerable provinces, rose in arms against the oppressions of the salt tax. The rebellion was fierce, and eventually successful. For when the sword and the axe had exhausted their powers, Henry was satisfied, or happy, to exempt the insurgent states completely,

and for ever, from the obnoxious impost, in return for a large sum of ready money. This important branch of the royal revenue thus ceased to be productive through a large part of the kingdom, while, in the provinces which still laboured under the burden, the productiveness of it was greatly diminished by the scarcely less improvident increase of the number and emoluments of the collecting officers.

In the creation and sale of useless employments, Henry was not content to imitate his father's example. He followed it with a recklessness so strange as might seem to have promised a speedy and overwhelming ruin. And yet, in obedience to one of those strange anomalies in human affairs to which I have so lately referred, in which folly and wisdom employ each other's weapons, some of the financial measures of Henry II., which, in their motive, were the least defensible, were in their result not merely innoxious, but productive of permanent and considerable advantages to his people.

I formerly explained how the Siéges Présidiaux gradually superseded the royal courts in the provinces of France. By a single stroke of his pen, Henry created sixty such tribunals, and as each of them was composed of nine judicial officers at the least, and usually of a still greater number, this measure enabled him to bring to market 600 judgeships at the same moment. It is difficult to suppose a financial resource more obnoxious to weighty and unanswerable objections. Yet, in reality, it had an effect resembling, as closely as possible, that of the law so recently enacted by our own parliament for the establishing county courts in all the considerable towns of England; a law of which I may in passing observe, that it is manifestly destined to be the

germ of the greatest social revolution ever advisedly produced amongst us by any deliberate act of our legislature.

In the same spirit Henry II., as we saw when we met last, attached the offices of treasurer-general and of comptroller-general to each of the sixteen generalities, or fiscal districts, into which Francis I. divided that part of France, which was called the Pays d'Election. So far as appears, Henry's views were limited to the emolument to be derived from the sale of those offices; but there seems no doubt that the creation of them materially increased the method and regularity with which the public accounts were kept and audited.

I have already had occasion to explain the grounds on which I think that the invasion of the liberties, internal, judicial, and financial, of the Church of France tended not to the increase, but to the destruction of the political liberties of the kingdom. I might at first sight, therefore, appear bound to add to the catalogue of the good works, or good designs, of Henry II., his pecuniary dealings with the clergy of his realm. The concordat between Francis I. and Leo X. had authorised Francis to deprive them of a large part of their ancient jurisdiction, independence, and patronage. Accordingly, in the year 1539, the chancellor, Guillaume Poyet, framed an ordinance, which acquired from him the title of *la Guillelmine*, and which inflicted that disadvantage on the whole clerical order of France. Abandoned by the pope, and at the mercy of the king, they proposed to repurchase their lost privileges at the enormous price of 3,000,000 of gold crowns, according to one account, or of livres, according to another. Henry accepted the offer, and, after receiving as much money as the

churchmen could raise by the sale of their plate, he proceeded with their concurrence to enact two ordinances. The first secured the balance due to him by an annual tax on every belfry in the kingdom. The second revoked the Guillelmine. Both ordinances were sent to the parliament for registration. They accepted the first and rejected the second. Acquiescing in *both* of their decisions, Henry entered into possession of the belfry tax. It had been imposed as a security for raising 3,000,000 livres. It was continued in force until it had actually yielded him 12,000,000. But the Guillelmine was also continued in force; and thus the Church of France was plundered, by the king of France, of 12,000,000 of livres, without receiving any equivalent whatever.

The next of Henry's financial projects, if less promising, was also less dishonest. The accounts of the revenue officers attached to the army, the treasury, and the royal household were in arrear, and their balances had accumulated in their hands. To prevent the recurrence of such irregularities, Henry doubled the number of those offices. Each accountant was to serve only in the alternate years, and each, during his year of inaction, was to bring up the accounts of his year of active service. Such was the avowed motive and apology for the change. The real motive was, that it enabled Henry to put up to sale as many offices in all these departments as he had found established there.

The last of his financial devices is, at first sight, not only blameless but commendable. It consisted in imposing duties of import in cases where, till then, duties of export only had been levied. But ignorance and folly would not abdicate their established authority, even in doing an act which wisdom itself

recommended. For many of the provinces of France itself were, for the purposes of this tax, placed on the footing of foreign countries; and the import duties thus in effect became prohibitions of intercourse between the different districts of the same state, to the extreme prejudice of the trade and prosperity of them all.

In the reign of Francis, the successor of Henry, the melancholy art or science of taxation altogether languished. For the first and last time it was then numbered among the *artes perditæ*. Yet such were the wants of his treasury, and such the sufferings of his people, that, as we formerly saw, he was constrained to adopt the remedy so hateful in royal eyes, of convening the States-General after they had fallen into disuse, if not into oblivion, during a period of more than seventy years. They were accordingly convoked in the city of Blois, and were holden there, though not by him, but by his brother and successor Charles IX. Of that meeting, and of the second convention of the States in the same city, under Henry III., I have already offered such an account as I have thought it necessary, or rather as I have found it possible, within these narrow limits of time, to lay before you. Passing over, therefore, the subject of those assemblies for the present, I observe, that, as a financier, Charles is chiefly memorable for two innovations: —

First, he established, with impartial injustice, taxes payable to the Crown by all suitors for redress in the judicial tribunals; a subject on which, indeed, an English commentator on the fiscal laws of our neighbours must moderate his zeal, and temper his invective; for the youngest of my audience is old enough to remember the time when, despite our ancient boasts and hereditary reverence for the Great Charter,

similar imposts were levied on all suitors in Westminster Hall.

But, secondly, if we have imitated Charles in his first example of exacting contributions from the distressed in the moment of their difficulties, we have not yet copied his second example, of striking at the prosperous in the hour of their triumph. That blow was aimed at the public accountants. It was judged, and probably it was rightly judged, that they had all fattened on ill-gotten gains. To have tried and punished them would have been praiseworthy. To have imposed on them heavy mulcts might have been not unreasonable; but to subject them to a large future annual impost (the method actually taken) was but indirectly to authorise their future extortions, on the tacit understanding that, by means of the new tax, to which they were subjected, the king himself was to participate in the plunder.

Difficult as it is to find any subject for eulogy in the disastrous reign of his successor, Henry III., we may safely applaud two of the three additions which he made to the burdens of his people. The first was a tax on the retailers of spirituous liquors; the second, a tax on all appointments to public offices. The profits both of the vintner and of the employé may well have admitted, and may often have demanded, such a reduction. But the maîtrise — or tax on admission into any trade—was, in effect, the creation of a monopoly. The purchasers of such licences, therefore, regarded the price paid for them, not with patience merely, but with complacency and favour. It protected them against the competition of all traders who could not afford to make similar payments, and who were, therefore, prevented from passing from the condition of apprentices into that of masters.

I gladly emerge from these wearisome details, and from the dark era to which they relate, into brighter times, and more interesting topics.

When the House of Valois had become extinct, and Paris had at length submitted to Henry IV., the miseries of France had reached a height far exceeding even that of the woes by which it was visited two centuries afterwards during the agony of the great revolution. The victims of the religious wars had not been much, if at all, less than a million souls. Nine great cities had been demolished. Two hundred and fifty villages had been burned. The number of houses destroyed was calculated at 128,000. Commerce, manufactures, and even agriculture, had been abandoned through extensive districts, and were languishing in all. The single branch of industry which flourished was that of the tax gatherer. The single class of people who lived in abundance were the great lords and châtelains, who, with their armed followers, wrung the means of subsistence from the terrified and half-starved peasantry.

From the letters of Henry himself, we may best gather what was at this time the distress of the royal treasury. "I have," he says, "neither a horse to ride, nor a saddle and bridle to put on him if I had. All my shirts are in rags, and all my doublets out at elbows. My kettle is often empty, and, on the last two days, I have been dining with one and another as I could, for my purveyors say that I have nothing to put on my table." From the Memoirs of Sully, and from the work of his contemporary Fromenteau, might be drawn a vivid picture of the financial embarrassments amidst which the first of the Bourbons ascended the throne of his ancestors. The national debt amounted to 345,000,000 of the livres

of that age, or to about 15,000,000 of pounds sterling; of which a large part bore interest at the rate of 12 per cent. per annum. The gross amount of the taxes annually collected was 170,000,000. The annual net receipt of the treasury was only 30,000,000, of which 19,000,000 were absorbed for the interest of the debt. Thus of each 170 livres which the people paid, the proportion actually applied to the service of the state was only 11 livres.

Henry first attempted to remedy these evils by appointing a revenue board of eight officers. The following is his own account of the result of that experiment:—"Instead of one gormandiser, whom I had before, I have helped myself to eight. These rogues, and the swarm of subordinates whom they have brought after them, manage, by one trick and another, to eat up the whole hog. They have already made away with 100,000 crowns, with which I could have driven the Spaniards out of France."

Sully then came to his master's aid. Our chancellors of the exchequer, laborious as they may be, never dream of such toils as fell to his lot. His sword was as necessary to him as his pen, for he had to challenge to mortal combat, or accept the challenges, of the noble antagonists of his economical reforms. His stud of thoroughbred horses were his most effective subalterns; for he had to gallop from one end of France to the other to detect abuses, and to fill his treasure waggons. The passages of his house were blocked up with bags of silver, and with suitors for a share of it, until, with rough words, and still rougher blows, he had defended the coin, and beaten back the suitors. The gallant baron also, when occasion required it, had to be as expert as the

best disciple of Loyola in pious frauds, to circumvent the knaves who were attempting to circumvent him; as, for example, when he lamented to some revenue officers his irreparable loss of a long series of vouchers, which, however, he triumphantly exhibited to them as soon as, in the belief of his statement, they had sufficiently falsified their accounts, and exposed their knavery.

The tone in which the great financier chuckles over his address in baffling rogues at their own weapons, is, however, more pardonable than his exultation in the ruse which he played off on the Assembly of Notables at Rouen, whom Henry had convened to aid him with their advice as to the improvement of his finances. They proposed that a committee of their own body should take on them the administration of half of the royal revenue, leaving the other half to be administered by the king. Sully states himself to have warmly and successfully advised the acceptance of this proposal. But the sagacious minister took care, as he informs us, so to divide the revenue as to reserve to himself the productive and least unpopular sources of it, assigning to the more ignorant committee the proceeds of all the taxes which were most unpopular and least profitable. He tells, with infinite glee, how distinctly he foresaw the inevitable result, and with what pleasure he witnessed it,—how the committee, bewildered, harassed, and fatigued, fell into disgrace with the people, and became disgusted with their undertaking,—how he, on the contrary, sustained triumphantly his share of the burden which he had so ingeniously divided between his shoulders and theirs,—and how gladly they at length abdicated their ungracious office, leaving

him without a rival in the administration of the finances of France.

They could scarcely have been transferred into hands more worthy of such a trust. His character was not, indeed, cast in a very sublime mould. It was composed of none of those qualities which we ardently love, or passionately admire. He rose to the eminent station he fills in history by homely virtues, which might seem to be within the reach of most men, —by calm self-possession, — by a courage which nothing could daunt, —by an industry which nothing could fatigue, —by a perseverance from which caprice never diverted him, —by a heart-loyalty to the king he served, —by an honest zeal for the welfare of his country, —and by an habitual sympathy with the weak and the oppressed. Yet there was not a spark of enthusiasm in his nature. Neither the gaiety of youth, nor the experience of old age, could ever withdraw him from the path, however irksome or invidious, by which his own wealth and greatness might be best secured. He first introduces himself to us in his Memoirs in the character of an amateur horse-dealer in the camp of Henry, and he takes his leave of us in possession of dignities which might have satiated the ambition of a Guise, and of wealth which might have quenched the cupidity of a Law. His Protestantism seems to have been little more than a domestic tradition, a party badge, and a point of honour. But if Sully did not live in very high latitudes of thought or sentiment, he lived under the guidance of clear good sense and of many honest instincts. He could never have been the founder of a school of wisdom, or of any independent dominion, political, military, or intellectual. But he has bequeathed to the wise an example from which they may draw

many a useful lesson for the successful conduct of life in the highest and most arduous of all subordinate secular employments.

Sully and his master quitted together the war which they had so long waged against the Catholics, to fight side by side against the jobbers, impostors, usurers, and depredators of their age. His "Economies Royales," and "Le Secret des Finances" by Fromenteau, exhibit the whole plan and conduct of those later campaigns. The following brief epitome of them may be enough to stimulate your curiosity to consult those originals.

The financial career of Sully began, it must be confessed, with an imitation of the worst examples of the worst of his predecessors. He increased the public debt, he raised the salt duties, he extorted a forced loan from the public accountants, and he created and sold many public offices. But the folly of one period is often the wisdom of another. Wretched as these resources were, none other could immediately be found to rescue Paris from the danger, and France from the invasion, which the surrender of Amiens to the arms of Spain portended. To meet that alarming crisis, political economy, and all other economies, were most judiciously given to the winds. But the Treaty of Vervins, which restored peace to Europe, restored also to Sully the means of acting on more enlarged and permanent principles.

The first of those principles was, in his own words, that the land, and the labour bestowed on the land, *sont les deux mamelles de l'état.* His inferences from this doctrine were, first, that agriculture should be relieved, to the utmost possible extent, from all fiscal burdens; and, secondly, that the expenditure of

the state should, as far as possible, be thrown on the non-agricultural classes of society.

Pursuing this theory to its practical consequences, Sully remitted to the landholders arrears of tailles, amounting to 20,000,000 of livres. He reduced the tailles for future years to two thirds of their former amount. He exempted all the instruments, animate or inanimate, of agricultural labour, from the liability to seizure for debt. He discharged the cultivators of the soil from the burden of maintaining the king's troops, either on their march, or in their quarters. He prohibited all local taxation by the governors of provinces, or by the lords of seigneuries; and he abolished all duties on agricultural produce when sold in the public markets. The cry of agricultural distress has seldom been met with a response so cordial.

To remit taxes is, however, an easy and a grateful task. To combine this hazardous luxury with a just regard for the public service, and a conscientious respect for the public credit, is the crucial test of a minister of finance. It is a test by which Sully may be tried, and not be found wanting. I find no less than five great measures of economy by which he justified his remission of duties.

First. He suppressed every superfluous office of emolument, beginning with those which he had himself created and sold. But these reductions were invariably made with a cautious regard to the public faith which had been pledged to the purchasers.

Secondly. He effected a saving of 600,000 crowns per annum, by paying directly from the public treasury the interest of a debt for which certain specific revenues had been mortgaged. The creditors had, till then, been in receipt of the mortgaged revenues,

and had, of course, discovered that the costs of the collection swallowed up whatever remained after the discharge of their own annual interest.

Thirdly. Sully, in the same manner, enforced the restitution to the Crown of crown estates, of vast value, which he found in possession of public creditors, as a security for the loans advanced on the mortgage of them; but at the same time he repaid, by means of a temporary loan, the whole of the principal sums which were really due on that security.

Fourthly. He expunged from what was called the Great Book of France, public debts amounting to 6,000,000 of livres per annum. A "commission of inquiry" (I have more than once had occasion to remind you that there is no new thing under the sun) enabled him to effect this operation, by proving that many of the public creditors held under invalid titles; or had been inscribed as creditors against the public for valuable considerations which had been nominally, and not really, paid.

Fifthly. The same inexorable avenger of frauds doubled the receipt of the treasury from the farms of the customs and salt tax, by setting up those farms to auction, after having first distinctly ascertained that the existing leases had been obtained by false representations of the real produce of those branches of revenue.

To these measures of economy is to be added the imposition of a solitary tax to sustain the public credit and expenditure. It borrowed the name of La Paulette from Charles Paulet, the projector of it. At that time, public offices had become domestic inheritances. The evil was as irremediable as it was grievous. Paulet, therefore, proposed to impose a tax upon all public offices, amounting to one sixtieth

part of their annual emoluments. It was an impost welcome to the office-holders themselves, as it secured the permanency of their titles. It was welcome to Sully, and to the public, as being a kind of salvage, where the wreck and loss would otherwise have been total.

It remains to mention the last of Sully's financial measures. It consisted, *first*, in devising a new system of rendering and keeping the public accounts as a security against the frauds which had, till then, found shelter under the ancient confused and irregular system of accounting. It consisted, *secondly*, in establishing the all-important rule (which to this hour is not in full force amongst ourselves), that no public money should be issued by any collector of it, except in pursuance of a royal ordinance. But here he paused. It was one of the errors of this great man to despise commercial interests, and one of his infirmities to dislike commercial men. When, therefore, a great merchant of Bruges, Simon Stephen by name, interpreted to him the counting-house mystery of double entry, and advised him to adopt it into the financial accounts of France, Sully rejected, with ignorant contempt, the best possible security against the frauds with which he was warring.

Such are the operations on which the financial fame of Sully depends. They attest his courage, constancy, and vigorous understanding. But they do not indicate any profound insight into the principles of political government and political economy. Such studies were, indeed, foreign alike to the man, and to his generation. So defective was he in these sciences, that he even increased those transit dues, which placed the adjacent provinces of France in the same mercantile relation to each other as to foreign countries; extending, for ex-

ample, the customs duties on goods borne across the Loire, to many articles till then exempt from them; — exacting a tribute on all merchandise entering, or quitting, the city of Lyons; — and requiring that all goods sent from that city to distant markets should be carried, either through Vienne, or St. Colombe (however great the deviation), because, in those two places, and there alone, were stationed collectors of the export duties. It is with still greater surprise that we read, that Sully was the single opponent of the proposal for retaliating against the ships of foreign nations in French ports, the heavy charges to which French ships were subject in the ports of any such nation, — that we find him resisting the introduction of Dutch and Flemish artisans to teach, in France, the arts which had enriched their own countries, — and that we learn that he discouraged, both the growth of mulberry trees, and the manufacture of silks, brocades, and satins, because the tendency of such arts was to foster an enervating luxury.

The influx of precious metals from South America had, in his age, so augmented the price of all articles of general consumption, that the royal revenue became continually less and less adequate to sustain the charges to which it was liable. Sully had recourse to many remedies to arrest this unwelcome change in the value of money. At one time he altered the money of account. At another he forbade the importation of foreign coins. Then he prohibited the export of specie, and finally he raised the nominal value of all the gold and silver coins current in France. It is needless to say that he laboured in vain. The world had yet to learn that gold and silver, whether with or without the impress of a national mint, obey the same laws which regulate the

prices and the interchange of all other merchantable articles.

We must admit, therefore, that Sully was ignorant of many economical truths with which the striplings of our own times are familiar. But he understood the great science of elevating a ruined people into a prosperous nation. Under the House of Valois, France had been plunged into what might have seemed an abyss of irreparable calamities; under the administration of Sully it was restored to peace, to order, and to wealth. He found the revenue overwhelmed with debt; he not only left it unincumbered, but amassed a vast treasure for the defence of the nation, or for foreign conquest. He found the French liable to annual taxes amounting to 30,000,000; he reduced that amount to 26,000,000 per annum. He found the royal palaces in decay; he restored them to splendour. He found the fortresses of the kingdom dilapidated; he renewed their strength, and increased their number. Churches, hospitals, and other public edifices arose on every side. The highways and bridges were repaired. The Pont Neuf, the quays of Paris, and some of the principal streets of that city, attest, at this hour, the grandeur to which the parsimony and thrift of the real ruler of France, in the reign of the first of the Bourbons, were subservient. The royal arsenals were filled with munitions of war. A navy was rising in the French dockyards. A vast system of internal navigation was in progress, for connecting the Seine with the Loire, the Loire with the Saone, and the Saone with the Meuse; and rewards, becoming the dignity of the king of France, were bestowed on all who had attained to eminence in art, or science, or in the public service. If Henry's celebrated wish,

that the poorest peasant in his kingdom might eat meat every week-day, and have a chicken in his pot for his Sunday's dinner, was not exactly fulfilled, yet no slight advance had been made towards the fulfilment of it. In his reign the cultivators of the soil were rescued from many of the worst tyrannies of the noblesse, of the soldiery, and of the tax-gatherers. Every man planted in quiet, and reaped in safety. The artisan received the hire of his labour. The merchant gathered in the profits of his capital. Astræa had not, indeed, revisited the land; but the iron age of war, and famine, and fiscal oppression had passed away. Relieved of the burdens beneath which they had so long groaned, the French people sprang forward in the path of improvement with a youthful elasticity of spirit, indicating that all the nobler organs of social life in France still retained their healthful tone and their unimpaired vitality.

And yet neither Henry, nor his great minister, restored to their nation any security against the recurrence of the abuses which they had so arrested. In later times those evils re-appeared, if not with equal intensity, yet in a character substantially the same. Two centuries were yet to pass without a serious effort to introduce constitutional freedom; nor could the power of the purse which, in theory at least, still belonged to the representatives of the French people, yield that its legitimate fruit throughout the whole of that protracted period.

I proposed at the outset to inquire, What was the true cause of the failure of a hope which the experience of other nations might teach us to regard as so reasonable? Throughout the preceding details, and in my former lecture on the Sources and Management of the Finances of France, I have attempted to

prepare the way for what I suppose to be the true solution of that problem.

First, then, the principle that the people could not be lawfully taxed except by their own consent, given by their own representatives, was at all times recognised much more as a theory, with which to polish rhetorical periods, than as a practical rule for the government of the different members of the state. The substitution of splendid phrases for plain sense and for practical measures is one of the inveterate maladies of the national mind of France.

Secondly. As I attempted to show in a former lecture, this principle was barren of its proper fruits, because the representatives of the French people were not summoned except in extreme exigencies—because, when summoned, they were content to remonstrate and petition, instead of insisting on their right to legislate and to act—and because they failed in the skill, now to yield, and now to resist, at the right time, and in the right measure. Or, more briefly, all the reasons which, as we have formerly seen, rendered the States General incompetent to their other functions, rendered them also unfit to wield the power of the purse as a weapon of constitutional liberty.

Thirdly. The assumption by the kings of France of the legislative power was fatal to the popular power of the purse; for, although the recognised theory still refused to the king the right to make a revenue law, yet the distinction between the different classes of enactments was not easily drawn by the most upright sovereigns, and was very easily obliterated by all the rest.

Fourthly. The assumption by the parliaments of the right to an effective veto on the royal enactments had a direct and a powerful tendency to render the

popular power of the purse sterile of constitutional freedom. For, in consequence of that assumption, the parliaments combined their judicial powers with a share in the legislative authority. When, therefore, they had assented to a law as legislators, they were at once able and bound to give effect to it as judges. And that assent was, in fact, easily obtained even to a royal ordinance, which illegally imposed new and unconstitutional tributes on the people at large. For as the parliaments comprised no representative or popular element in their composition, they were seldom either well disposed, or well able, to oppose more than a faint and irresolute resistance to the royal will; and their resistance, even when most resolute, could be imperiously overruled at a lit de justice.

Fifthly. The want of a really independent system of judicature deprived the people of France of any means of arresting the assumption by the Crown of any fiscal prerogatives to which it from time to time laid claim, though such claims were often invalid, and were not seldom destitute of any foundation whatever.

Sixthly. Those royal prerogatives, especially in whatever related to trade, whether internal or external, were so vast,—as always to rescue the kings of France from much of the dependence on the good will of their people, into which they might otherwise have been brought;—and, as usually, to afford them the ready means of corruption by a patronage which, at the moment, might seem to cost themselves nothing.

Seventhly. The wars with England, the Italian wars, the rivalry with the House of Austria, and the wars of religion, which, from 1337 to 1598, that is, during more than 260 years, subjected France to such

calamities, and such waste of treasure, as no other European state has ever had to sustain, while they proved the marvellous extent and elasticity of her resources, proved also a fatal obstacle, or rather a succession of fatal obstacles, not only to economy in the management of the public revenue, but also to any use of the power of the purse as a counterpoise to the powers of the sceptre and of the sword.

Eighthly. The establishment of a standing army under Charles VII., and the permanent appropriation to its support of the seigniorial tailles, were among the disastrous results of those wars, and enervated all the efforts by which, from that time forward, the popular party ever sought to restrain the authority of the king, and to assert their own. The taille, though charged by the States General of Charles with an annual liability of 1,200,000 livres only, for this purpose, became virtually liable for it to an indefinite extent.

Ninthly. The exemption of the privileged classes from the tailles, and from some other of the more oppressive taxes, by destroying all community of interest between the different ranks of contributors to the public treasury, prevented their ever adopting any decisive and unanimous measures to arrest the bursal encroachments of the Crown upon the people. Or, rather, the Crown could hardly make any such encroachment without finding active allies in one or more of the orders of the State.

Tenthly. The isolation of the Clergy from the Nobles and the Tiers Etat in whatever related to taxation, was a privilege which the Church possessed and boasted at the expense of the secular interests of her own members, and of the commonwealth at large. Her gratuitous gifts were gratuitous only in name;

but they enabled the king, first to disregard, and then to overrule, the more prudent resistance of his secular subjects to his most exorbitant demands upon them.

Eleventhly. The right, or supposed right, of the Crown to anticipate the royal revenue by loans made without the consent of the States General, or even of the parliaments, was amongst the most habitual and the most fatal of the causes of the impotency of those bodies to oppose any effectual obstacle to the expenditure, and to the financial independence, of their sovereigns.

Twelfthly. The ill conduct and ill success of the popular insurrections by which, at different times, the people attempted to fetter the hands of their wasteful monarchs, not only counteracted the designs of the insurgents, but strengthened the power which they had so fruitlessly endeavoured to coerce.

Thirteenthly. When, occasionally, fiscal reforms were extorted from the Crown, they were invariably destitute of any effectual guarantee for the faithful observance of the concessions so made to the public voice. To such disappointments succeeded disgust and indifference, if not despondency, among the most zealous reformers.

Fourteenthly. The same results were induced by the want of any effective plan of rendering and auditing the accounts of the kingdom. The abuse of the acquits de comptant was itself enough to baffle every attempt to bring the government into any due subordination to the people in the use of the funds raised for the civil and military service of the kingdom.

Finally, as I shall attempt to show in future lectures, public opinion, as expressed by the most eminent of the French authors, did nothing and

attempted nothing, to strengthen the foundations, or to explain the importance, of the great constitutional doctrine of the French monarchy.

I have thus endeavoured to compress into the shortest possible compass, my answers to the problem with which I commenced the present lecture. Your own study of French history will, I trust, enable you both to appreciate the accuracy of those answers, and to multiply their number.

LECTURE XV.

ON THE REFORMATION AND THE WARS OF RELIGION.

To have emancipated the human mind from the errors of Papal Rome, is but one of the many triumphs of the Reformation. In almost every part of the Christian world, that great religious enfranchisement was followed by civil liberty, as at once its offspring and its guardian. But in France it was otherwise; and I proceed to inquire, how it happened that the protest made by so large a part of the French people against the tyranny of the Roman Church, was not followed by any effectual resistance to the despotism of the reigning dynasty? To render the answer to that question intelligible, it is necessary that I should indicate some of the principal steps of the progress of the Reformation in that kingdom; and if that preface should appear disproportionately long, I would bespeak your indulgence till it shall appear, what are the uses to which it is to be at length applied.

For the Protestant Reformers of the 16th century has been claimed a spiritual lineage, ascending, in unbroken succession, though the Moravians, the disciples of Huss and of Wicliff, the Albigenses, and the Paulicians, until it reaches the primitive ages of Christianity. For another race of Reformers has been traced a different genealogy, ascending through Savonarola, Gerson, D'Ailly, and Bernard of Clairvaux, until it reaches the Fathers of many ancient synods, who clung with passionate fondness to the Church which they endeavoured at once to purify and to maintain. To subdue the first of these generations of men by terror, and the second by blandishments, had, during many ages, been the office of the Papacy, when a new and irresistible power interposed as the arbiter in that protracted strife. The human mind, aroused from the slumber of centuries, announced, in ten thousand different but concurring voices, that the dominion of ignorance and of superstition was drawing to a close. Luther made that proclamation to the potentates assembled at Worms, in the year 1521; and, in the same year, the doctrines of Luther were, for the first time, publicly announced in France. The city of Meaux, which was destined to become, in a future age, the episcopal seat of the greatest of all the opponents of the Reformation, enjoyed, at that time, the nobler distinction of becoming the cradle of the Reformed Faith in the French monarchy.

Of that faith, James Lefevre and William Farel were the earliest confessors. Lefevre had nearly completed his seventieth year, Farel had not quite attained the age of twenty-four. Each of them had derived his new opinions from the study of the Scriptures, and they lived together in the interchange of that touching affection, which occasionally unites the

aged and the young. The contemplative spirit of the old man and the fervour of his youthful associate were blended together in harmonious concert and mutual co-operation. Nor were they long dependent only on each other's aid. They found, at once, a patron and a fellow-labourer in William Briçonnet, the bishop of the diocese. He assisted them in publishing a translation of the Evangelists, and in preaching the Evangelical doctrines. Nor did they preach in vain. So extensive and so lasting was their influence that, throughout the first half of the 16th century, a "heretic of Meaux" became the popular name in France for an antagonist of the See of Rome.

But against such heretics the voice of the Sorbonne was raised with a resentment whetted by the keen sense of some galling indignities. They had lately published a decree in which Luther was compared to Mahomet; and Melancthon had derided it as "the wild production of certain Parisian Theologasters, of doctors under whose guidance it was the ill fortune of France to be placed." Such doctors were not, however, to be laughed at with impunity. They cited Bishop Briçonnet before the Parliament of Paris, and extorted from him a humiliating retractation of his imputed errors. John le Clerc, another of the heretics of Meaux, became, on this occasion, the protomartyr of the Reformation in France. Farel fled into Dauphiné, where he preached in the dry beds of winter torrents, or in the mountain fastnesses, until he was compelled to seek refuge in Basil. Lefevre escaped to Nerac, there to close his long life under the protection of Marguerite of Valois.

That lady holds an eminent place in the history, both of the literature and of the reformation, of her native land. Every one will, indeed, gladly cherish

the disbelief of her authorship of the collection of Tales for which she is celebrated; for they egregiously violate the delicacy of her sex, and the decencies of society. Or, if the evidence on which they are ascribed to her pen should be thought irresistible, let us not refuse to her memory the excuse afforded by the manners of her times; nor forget how nobly the fault was repaired by the sanctity of her later writings, and by her generous protection of all who in her days were persecuted for conscience sake.

She was the only sister, and the cherished friend, of Francis I.; but it is difficult to say to which of the conflicting creeds of their generation either of them was really attached. Francis, indeed, was a worshipper of the idol "Glory." He sought to propitiate that capricious power by many costly offerings—by eclipsing the achievements of Charles V.—by rivalling the splendour of Henry VIII.—by combining all the majesty of the first of European kings with all the gallantry of the first of European gentlemen—and by a munificent patronage of letters and of art. Yet le Roi Chevalier was rather a great actor, than a great agent, in the affairs of the world. His principles of conduct were continually overborne by the gusts of his transitory passions; and, both in the religious and the political controversies of his times, he changed his position and his alliances with the promptitude and the fickleness characteristic of all such unruly emotions. Marguerite, on the contrary, although her own personal belief seems to the last to have been unsettled, was inflexible in her zeal for the defence of the persons and the doctrines of the Reformers. Sometimes her influence with Francis arrested his severities towards them, and sometimes

his influence with her prevented her acceptance of their opinions. Many years of their lives were passed in this affectionate contest, which seems to have cemented, instead of diminishing, the love which they bore to each other. Ill fared it with any who, presuming on the superstitious weaknesses of either, dared to bring that affection to any hazardous test.

Thus Marguerite, having introduced several reformed preachers into the pulpits of Paris, the whole clerical body of the city revenged themselves against her for the insult. At the College of Navarre, the monks exhibited a play, in which she underwent a metamorphosis from a student of the Bible into a dæmon enveloped in flames. The more serious Sorbonne promulgated a decree, censuring her writings as heretical; and a Cordelier had the hardihood to recommend from his pulpit that she should be tied up in a sack and thrown into the Seine. Monks, Doctors, and Cordeliers were instantly sentenced, by the indignant king, to humiliating punishments; though scarcely had his wrath been appeased by their sufferings, when his passions veered round to the precisely opposite quarter.

The day-dream of the life of Francis was the conquest of the Milanese. An alliance with the Tuscan and the Papal Courts appeared to promise the fulfilment of that hope; and such an alliance might, as it then seemed, be cemented by the marriage of Henry, the eldest son of Francis, to Catherine of Medici, the niece of Clement VII. That pope having arrived in person at Marseilles, Francis, therefore, hastened thither to conclude with him this double compact, nuptial and political; and then, animated with a new zeal for the Papacy, he returned to Paris, to gratify the unfortunate Monks, Doctors,

and Cordeliers, by silencing their opponents, and dispersing their flocks. The Reformers did not endure these wrongs with their accustomed equanimity. In an evil moment they covered the walls of Paris, and even the door of the royal chamber, with placards containing unmeasured invectives against the mass, and the other observances and doctrines peculiar to their antagonists. Such an outrage on his religion and his person kindled an unquenchable fury in the soul of Francis, who commanded the immediate seizure and persecution of all the heretics; and either arranged, or assented to, a religious procession, which was designed to enhance the solemnity of his proceedings against them.

In most countries fêtes are but the idle pastimes of an idle day. In France it is often otherwise. The Fête of Paris, of the 29th January, 1535, was as momentous in its results, as it was imposing in its ceremonial. In the midst of a countless assemblage, thronging every street and house-top, appeared the king, preceded by all the sacred relics of his capital, and by all the ecclesiastical dignitaries who bore them, and followed by the princes of his blood, and by the various councillors and courts, guilds and companies of the city. Mass had been sung, and a royal banquet had been served, when, ascending his throne in the presence of his people, Francis solemnly announced his resolution to punish all heresy with death, and not to spare even his own children if they should be guilty of it. "Nay," he exclaimed, as he raised aloft his arm, "if this hand were infected with that disease, this other hand should chop it off." Such words, from such a speaker, were not addressed in vain to such an audience. I advance reluctantly to the close of the

narrative. The festivities of the day were ended by suspending six heretics from as many beams, which turned horizontally on a pivot, in such a manner that the revolutions of each beam brought the sufferers, one after another, over a furnace, into which they were successively plunged, until, by repeated immersions in that bath of fire, they were all at length destroyed. On that hideous spectacle Francis himself deliberately gazed. The people of Paris, maddened by this taste of blood, gave way to a ferocity which, during five successive reigns, scarcely ever ceased to offer new victims to Moloch in the name of the Prince of Peace. From this era, their fierce and unrelenting hostility to the Reformers takes its commencement. The fanaticism which was then aroused was satiated, at the distance of twenty-seven years, by the massacre of St. Bartholomew.

But, notwithstanding his domestic and political alliance with the Pope, Francis had concluded with the Protestant League, at Smalcalde, another confederacy, of which the object was the depression of the House of Austria. The intelligence of the persecutions of their brethren at Paris excited the liveliest resentment amongst the members of that league; and they indignantly intimated to Francis their purpose of making common cause with the emperor against himself, as the deadliest enemy of the faith of the Reformers. To avert the displeasure of his German allies, Francis made concessions, promises, and apologies. He assured them that the victims of the Fête of January, 1535, had been punished, not for their religion, but for their offences against the state; and, availing himself of the ever ready weapon supplied by the disunion of the Reformers, he added the assurance that they were not Lutherans but Sacramentarians.

This defence of the recent atrocities of Paris was read at Basil, by John Calvin. To defend his persecuted brethren against the calumnies of their persecutors, he published, in August 1535, his Christian Institutes. It announced to the world that the Reformation in France had at length found a leader and a head.

At the age of twelve (such were the habits of the times) Calvin had received the presentation of an ecclesiastical benefice, but, by the diligent study of the Bible, he became a zealous adherent and teacher of the reformed faith before he had completed twice that number of years. Having been compelled, by the doctors of the Sorbonne, to fly for his life from Paris, he taught the Gospel in Poitou; and there may yet be seen near Poitiers a cave, bearing his name, in commemoration of his having been accustomed to celebrate divine worship within its dark recesses. Driven from this and every other place of refuge in France, he at length found shelter at Basil.

In a future lecture I shall have occasion to discuss the literary merits of the great work which he published in that city. The religious influence which attended it is incalculable. It was received by the whole body of the Protestants in France as the standard around which they might all rally. It ascertained their doctrine, determined their discipline, and regulated their ecclesiastical organisation.

Within a year from the appearance of his Institutes, Calvin was nominated to be a minister of the Gospel at Geneva, and a professor of the college at that city. There he established, in his own person, a theocratic sovereignty; while by his books, his letters, and his missionaries, he governed the Re-

formed churches in France. The heretics of Meaux now assumed the name of Calvinists.

So vast were the literary, ministerial, and public labours of Calvin, that the history of them would appear altogether fabulous, if it did not rest partly on his existing works, and partly on the authority of his intimate friend and constant associate, Theodore Beza. It is a tale which reduces to a comparatively dwarfish stature, the most imposing of the giants of intellectual industry, on whom we are accustomed to gaze with the liveliest admiration. His moral and religious character are free from any recorded stain, except the execution of Servetus; on which subject, however, no one is entitled to pronounce a peremptory judgment, until he shall have read the elucidations of it, for which we are indebted to MM. Guizot and Mignet, and which will be found under the head of "Calvin," in the Musée des Protestants célèbres. The faults, or infirmities, usually imputed to him are, the love of power, the impatience of contradiction, and a disposition irascible, severe, and reserved. As he says of himself that he was of a *naturel sauvage et honteux*, I will not venture to undertake the defence of his temper against his own self-condemnation. But it is hardly a reasonable ground of censure, that power should have been dear to a man who, by the immediate gift of the Creator himself, had been invested with so eminent and unapproachable a superiority over his fellow-men. Neither is it intelligible why any one who had devoted such an intellect as his to studies of such surpassing energy and perseverance, and who had derived from them such immutable convictions as he possessed, should be blamed for a stern disregard of those garrulous gainsayers, to whom patience of thought was an un-

known mental exercise, and in whose mouths freedom of thought was an empty and unmeaning boast.

Judge, however, of Calvin as we may, it is impossible to deny him a place among the most illustrious of the conquerors whom history has recorded, —of the conquerors whose weapons were intellectual only, and whose dominion had its seat in the minds of their own and of succeeding generations. For in him the Protestants of France, of Switzerland, of the seven United Provinces, of Scotland, and of New England; with the Puritans, the Presbyterians, and the Independents of the other American States and of our own country, have ever recognised, or have been bound to recognise, their spiritual patriarch and ecclesiastical dictator. In the age in which he lived, such a dictatorship was indeed indispensable. If left without the guidance of some commanding intellect, the Huguenots of France could never (as far as mere human observation extends) have maintained their inevitable contest with their secular and spiritual antagonists.

It was a contest, not for toleration, but for existence. The ever versatile Francis had, indeed, occasionally assumed the office of protector of the Reformers in Germany, but he never failed recklessly to abandon it whenever such a change was required by his apparent interests. Thus, his alliance with the confederates of Smalcalde was forgotten as soon as his new policy prompted that other alliance which, under the mediation of Paul III., he concluded with Charles V., for the extermination of heresy throughout their respective dominions. And fearfully was that engagement fulfilled, when, in the year 1545, the Baron Oppeda (emulous, as it might seem, of the infamy of Simon de Montfort), under the sanc-

tion, or at least the supposed sanction, of Francis, massacred the last remnant of the Waldenses in Provence. The story of their sufferings is too shocking to be needlessly recited. It provoked a cry of indignation from one end of the kingdom to the other; for the religious wars had not as yet steeled the hearts of the French people to every sense of humanity. It agitated the dying moments of Francis himself, who, maintaining that Ompeda had far exceeded his orders, bequeathed to his son, Henry II., with the crown of France, the duty of punishing that imputed transgression.

Henry invoked in vain the sentence of the Parliament of Paris against Ompeda. But in his reign the Huguenots might bear with the greater patience the impunity of their enemies, since they then rejoiced in a vast and unforeseen increase in the strength and number of their friends. It was the era of the highest prosperity of the Reformation in France. Many of the greatest provinces, and of the chief provincial capitals, became, in appearance, Protestant—a change to be chiefly ascribed to the profound conviction, then generally diffused throughout the land, of the truth of the new doctrines; but not to that cause exclusively. For it is peculiar to the French Reformation, and characteristic of it, that the converts from the old opinions were chiefly made, not among the poor and illiterate, but among the wealthy, the learned, and the great. Many secular motives concurred with higher impulses in recommending to them such a change. The provincial nobles had long cherished a deep resentment against the sacerdotal order, as usurpers of their territorial rights and seigniorial privileges. The judges and lawyers were jealous of the encroachments of the ecclesiastical on

their own forensic authority. The merchants had discovered that there was, in the other parts of Europe, some mysterious link between the Protestant opinions and the prosperity of trade. The men of letters, whether lay or clerical, naturally turned their eyes to that quarter in which the range of speculative inquiry was enlarged, and the dominion of the human intellect extended.

Thus, neither authors, nor presses, nor money, were wanting to the diffusion of the Calvinistic creed. United into one great secret society, by a system of arbitrary signs, the Reformers traversed the country secure of a hospitable shelter; holding their assemblies in barns, or caves, or forest glades; and disseminating books and pamphlets throughout the whole of France, under the cover of mercantile consignments, or of pedlar's packages; while the ladies of the new faith increased its influence by exhibiting in their own persons a severe model of all the virtues of the female character. "I shall turn Huguenot myself (exclaimed Catherine of Medici in one of her sportive moods), that I also may pass for a prude and a dévote."

Her husband Henry harboured no such fancies, either in earnest or in jest. He had completed his twenty-ninth year when he ascended the throne of France—an elevation which if crowns were won by royal qualities alone he never could have attained. He was formed to enjoy, and to diffuse around him, the delights of society in its most brilliant and luxurious forms; and to shine among the foremost of the graceful, accomplished, good humoured, and indolent votaries of pleasure. In the dance, or the tournament, as a carpet knight, he might have safely indulged his feeble dependence on friends and

favourites. In the council chamber as a king, he indulged it to the ruin of his kingdom. Abdicating to Anne de Montmorenci, to Francis Duke of Guise, and to Diana of Poitiers, the real sovereignty of France, he laid the basis of those factions which, during the reigns of each of his sons, desolated the kingdom with misery and bloodshed.

Of the wrongs and cruelties done upon our earth, how vast is the proportion for which easiness of temper is responsible! Too obliging to refuse any thing to his mistress and his favourites, Henry II. gratified them by the first of that long series of iniquitous edicts against the Huguenots, which deform the collection of the laws of the French kings. Enacted in 1551, and called the edict of Châteaubriant, it decreed that any one accused of heresy might be tried, in succession, both by the secular and by the spiritual courts,—that, if convicted by either, the offender should at once be executed, even pending his appeal from that conviction,—that no one should intercede for his pardon,—that a third of his estate should be the reward of the informer,—and that every one suspected of heresy should incur these penalties, unless he should, by sufficient evidence, prove that suspicion to be unfounded. It might have been supposed that the wickedness and folly of such a law could be surpassed only by the wickedness and folly with which it was carried into execution. But the Cardinal of Lorraine, the Sorbonne, and Pope Paul IV. meditated a yet lower depth of iniquity. In the name of that pontiff, but at their instance, appeared in 1557 a bull, establishing the Inquisition in France. In the name of Henry, and at the instance of the same advisers, appeared a royal edict to carry that bull into execution. But there were yet some limits

to the subserviency of the French people. The Parliament of Paris refused to register the edict, although the king himself in person commanded it. They were inflexibly firm, and he characteristically flexible; and the contest, therefore, ended in the deliverance of his kingdom from the infamy and the woes which his fatal facility of disposition would otherwise have inflicted on it.

But, confident in their new and continually increasing strength, the French Reformers were roused by these injuries to a measure of self-defence, and of self-assertion, which, to all who could read the signs of the times, announced the swift approach of a deadly conflict between the hosts which arranged themselves under the opposite banners of Geneva and of Rome. Hitherto the Calvinists had met and worshipped together, at whatever times and places, and with whatever forms, the conveniences or exigencies of the passing moment suggested. Now they resolved to constitute themselves into a great national church, with ascertained laws, a regular organisation, and predetermined observances. Accordingly, on the 25th of May 1559, a general synod of all the Protestant congregations of the kingdom was solemnly convened, and deliberately holden in the city of Paris.

The ecclesiastical system adopted by this assembly was dictated by their great patriarch Calvin. It was prefaced by a general confession of the faith of the Reformed churches of France, and that confession was nothing else than an epitome of the doctrine taught in his own Institution Chrêtienne; the great fundamental article of all being, that the supreme rule, and single criterion of truth, among them was to be the revealed word of God. Then proceeding to the organisation of their ecclesiastical polity, this solemn

compact provided that, whenever the faithful were living contiguously to each other in numbers sufficient to form a separate local church, they should unite in electing a consistory (that is, a body of ruling elders), in calling a minister, and in providing for the celebration of the divine ordinances. All subsequent vacancies among the consistory, or in the ministry, were to be filled up by the elders, but subject to an effective veto on the part of the congregation. A certain number of local churches were each to elect an elder, who, with the respective ministers of all, were to form the conference of that locality. The kingdom of France being then divided into provinces (sixteen was the usual number of them), a provincial synod was to be holden annually in every province, composed of all the ministers within its precincts, and of one elder to be elected by each of the local churches which the province might comprise. At the summit of this hierarchy was placed a national synod, which was to meet once in each year, and to be composed of two ministers, and of two elders representing each of the provincial synods. The conferences were to govern, in the first instance, the local churches within their several limits. The provincial synods were to have a jurisdiction at once concurrent with, and superior to, that of the conferences. The national synod was to be both the ultimate tribunal, and the supreme legislature, of the whole body of the Protestant Church of France. Substitute for these titles the words presbyteries, kirk sessions, and general assembly, and you have here a complete prototype of the existing National Church of Scotland.

A great social revolution had thus been effected. Within the centre of the French monarchy, Calvin and his disciples had established a spiritual republic,

and had solemnly recognised, as the basis of it, four principles, each germinant of results of the highest importance to the political commonwealth. Those principles were,—first, that the will of the people was the one legitimate source of the power of their rulers,—secondly, that power was most properly delegated by the people to their rulers by means of elections, in which every adult man might exercise the right of suffrage,—thirdly, that in ecclesiastical government the clergy and the laity were entitled to an equal and co-ordinate authority;—and, fourthly, that, between the Church and the State, no alliance or mutual dependence, or other definite relation, necessarily or properly subsisted. The ultimate results of this decisive advance of the Calvinistic party will be considered hereafter. The immediate consequence of it was to bring to light the fact that, in the bosom of the Parliament of Paris, were concealed many of the followers of Calvin who had hitherto wanted courage to avow themselves.

Of this number was Anne Dubourg, himself a magistrate of eminent learning, and the descendant of a family illustrious amongst the magistracy of France. In his place in the parliament, and in the presence of Henry, he now ventured not only to invoke a national council for the reform of religion in France, but even to denounce the persecution of heretics as a crime against Him whose holy name they were accustomed to adore with their dying breath. Dubourg expiated this audacity with his death. But, before the grave had been opened for him, it had closed on his royal persecutor. The accidental stroke of the lance of Count Montgomery, at the tournament of June, 1559, terminated the

reign and life of Henry, and transferred his crown to his eldest son, Francis II.

Francis ascended the throne of his ancestors when he had scarcely completed his sixteenth year; and the possession of the real government of France, under the name of the young and feeble king, became the prize for which three unscrupulous rivals eagerly contended.

First in rank, as in just pretensions, was the queen-mother, Catherine of Medici. She is one of those persons on the historical portraitures of whom it is painful and humiliating to dwell. None of them throw any doubt on her courage, her energy, or her commanding talents; and none of them ascribe to her any of the qualities we love, or of the virtues we esteem. They represent her to us as a living impersonation of the ideal prince of her countryman Machiavelli; as engaged, throughout her long life, in the unremitting pursuit of dominion:—of dominion on any terms, but as best pleased to obtain it by craft, by treachery, and by intrigue;—as rendering every other desire subservient to this one master passion;—as sacrificing to it even her conjugal and her maternal affections;—and as exhibiting the frightful aspect of a woman who, without human sympathies, or religious principles, submitted herself to the despotism of a blind selfishness, which shame could never daunt, and conscience could never restrain. For the sake of our common nature, let us trust that these pictures have been discoloured by the too natural indignation and abhorrence of those from whom we have received them; though, even if the colours be really too dark, it is, I fear, too late now to attempt any correction of the error.

The second of the aspirants for the government of

the king and of his kingdom, was Francis, Duke of Guise. Just forty-six years before this time, his father, Claude of Lorraine, had quitted that duchy in search of better fortunes in France; bringing thither, as the Protestant writers say, "nothing more than a stick in his hand, and one servant behind him." In France he became the father of four daughters and of six sons, of whom Francis, Duke of Guise, was the eldest, and Charles, Cardinal of Lorraine, was the second. The Duke was a skilful, high spirited, irascible, and unscrupulous soldier, who had achieved great glory by the defence of Metz, by the capture of Calais, and by the victory of Renty. The Cardinal, on the other hand, was so remarkable for personal cowardice, that he was himself accustomed to make it the subject of his own pleasantry. It was united (no infrequent union) to a graceful elocution, insinuating manners, a penetrating foresight of coming events, and exquisite subtlety in the conduct of affairs. But the Cardinal was also the victim of that chronic fever of ambition from which timid men are usually exempt; and was haunted by importunate visions of the French crown resting on his brother's head, and of the papal tiara alighting on his own.

The third candidate for the administration of the government of France was Antoine, the head of the House of Bourbon, and therefore the first prince of the blood royal, next after the brothers of the king. He bore the title of King of Navarre, in right of Jane d'Albret his wife, who was the titular queen of that almost nominal sovereignty. The chief purpose of the otherwise purposeless existence of Anthony was to exchange his empty title of King of Navarre for the dominion of some real kingdom in any place, and on any terms. He was one of those men whose

characters shift with the shifting events of each successive day, or with the uncertain mood of each new associate. With the Calvinists he would chant hymns in the Pré-aux-Clercs at Paris, and with the Catholics he would attend a Calvinistic auto-da-fé at the Place de Grêve.

Such having been the three aspirants to the Regency, it remains to notice their great antagonist, Gaspard de Coligny, the military hero of the French Reformation. He was the second of the three sons of the Comte de Châtillon, and of the sister of the Constable Montmorency. Having either acquired or confirmed his religious opinions by the study of the Scriptures during a protracted captivity which he underwent as a prisoner of war after the battle of St. Quentin, he regarded the honours and emoluments of the world with a holy indifference, and, with the exception of his titular office of Admiral of France, renounced all the high and lucrative employments in the state which he had previously enjoyed. In the domestic privacy to which he retired, he became an example of the most severe self-discipline, united to a fervent and habitual devotion. In the civil wars into which he was afterwards drawn, nothing was wanting to his glory except success; for he was an unfortunate commander, and though a braver man never drew his sword even in the armies of France, yet, in the critical moments of battle, he was deficient in promptitude and decision. His younger brother D'Andelôt was also a gallant but ill-fated officer in the Huguenot ranks; while his elder brother, Odêt Châtillon, who had become a cardinal in his seventeenth year, and had married in his maturer days, ended his life in England as an exile.

Coligny and his friends were the dupes of the ar-

tifices by which Catherine paved her sure, though slow and cautious, path to the nominal regency and real sovereignty of France. To conciliate their favour, she assumed the appearance of a humble inquirer into the grounds of their doctrines, and they, with glad credulity, hailed her as a new Esther, born for the deliverance of the persecuted votaries of the truth.

The Duke of Guise and the Cardinal of Lorraine pursued a more direct and ingenuous course than hers. Having effected the marriage of the king to their niece, Mary, Queen of Scots, they seized upon all the highest stations of public trust and authority —the Duke becoming general in chief of the royal forces—the Cardinal assuming the superintendence of the royal finances. Never had the throne of France been more completely overshadowed by those who had mounted on its footsteps, since the Merovingian kings had bowed to the supremacy of the mayors of their palace.

The powers thus gained by the Princes of Lorraine were zealously employed for the destruction of the Calvinists. In every parliament in the kingdom they established Chambers, charged with the especial office of trying, and consigning to the flames, all persons guilty of heresy; and which, for that reason, received the appropriate title of Chambres ardentes. The Calvinists, while exasperated by these persecutions, were brought into frequent intercourse with the military suitors of the treasury, whose just but unwelcome demands the Cardinal-superintendant had repelled with intolerable indignities. Mutually cherishing each other's resentments against their common enemies, the two parties concerted together a plan for subverting, by their united arms, the

usurped power of the Duke and Cardinal. The casuists of the Huguenots encouraged the design, teaching that such resistance would not be unlawful if conducted under the guidance of a prince of the blood royal, and if sanctioned by the States General of the realm. Louis de Condé, the brother of the King of Navarre, consented to fulfil the first of these conditions; and it was resolved by the confederates, that, in due time, the second also should be accomplished. With their passions excited, and their consciences tranquillised, they therefore resolved to seize the persons of the King, the Cardinal, and the Duke, in order that justice might be done upon the new mayors of the palace, and that the new Childeric might be transferred to a more faithful guardianship.

The conspiracy of Amboise (for so the project was called from the place at which it was to be carried into effect) was defeated by the treachery of one of the conspirators. The punishments which followed are too horrible for description. Hundreds perished by the hands of the public executioners, and hundreds, bound hands and feet together, were thrown into the Loire. And thus, in the year 1560, were exactly anticipated the Noyades of the Revolution; except, indeed, that a Prince of the Church, Charles, Cardinal of Lorraine, took the place of the butcher Carrier; and except that Catherine of Medici, and her ladies of honour, assumed, in this dismal tragedy, characters to which, even in the frenzy of the reign of terror, the vilest of the Poissardes of Paris would scarcely have descended.

Nor were these the only disasters in which this ill-concerted scheme involved the Huguenots. They soon learnt with terror, that it had supplied the Duke of Guise with a pretext for assuming the office of

Lieutenant General of France, and for extorting from the king a promise to sanction whatever acts he might do in that capacity; and that it had afforded the Cardinal of Lorraine an excuse for establishing, by the royal edict of Romorantin, an episcopal tribunal in every diocese of the realm, for the trial and punishment of heresy.

But deep called unto deep. The alarmed and exasperated Huguenots, confident in their strength, or deriving courage from despair, rose in many parts of France to repel, or at least to punish, their antagonists. Throughout the South and West of the kingdom, a large proportion of the churches were seized for their use, and devoted to their public worship; while, in Dauphiné and Provence, they celebrated that worship sword in hand, and then pillaged the property of the Catholics, and abused the persons of their priesthood. Anarchy and civil war were brooding over the distracted land.

In the midst of these tumults was raised a voice, earnestly and pathetically inculcating toleration and peace. It was the voice of the party called Les Politiques, of which the Chancellor l'Hôpital was the head. They spoke with all the energy of wisdom and of truth, and with all the authority of the highest rank and reputation to whichany statesmen of that age had risen in France by their own unaided and personal merits. Nor did they speak altogether in vain; for not even Guise, or his brother, could resist their instances that the Huguenots should at least be heard in their own vindication.

In August, 1560, therefore, Coligny appeared before the king and an assembly of Notables, who had been convened for that purpose at Fontainebleau. Presenting to them the written petition of the whole

Reformed Church of the kingdom, he demanded the royal assent to their request for the free performance of their public worship. "Your petition," replied the king, "bears the signature of no one." "True sire," rejoined Coligny, "but if you will allow us to meet for the purpose, I will, in one day, obtain in Normandy alone 50,000 signatures." Even if the number was exaggerated, it was an exaggeration which, from such lips, indicated a reality full of danger. Long and anxious were the debates which followed. They resulted in a decision to convene both the States General of the kingdom and a National Council, to decide what should be the religious faith of the French people. Neither they, nor any other people, had as yet learnt, that any such absolute unity of belief and of worship was not really possible, and was, perhaps, not even to be desired.

I attempted, in a former lecture, to explain the general motives which had induced all the four great political parties in France to concur in the convocation of the States General of Orleans. But there was yet a further motive which recommended that measure to the Princes of Lorraine. It promised them a favourable opportunity for the execution of two atrocious treasons. Assuming that the convention of the representatives of the kingdom would lull the Huguenots into a false security, they meditated a military massacre, which, by destroying many of them in every province, was to strike at the very roots of the new heresy. Assuming, also, that the two Princes of the House of Bourbon would present themselves at Orleans, unprotected by any armed force, they had arranged a plan for the seizure and destruction of them both. This part of their project

was, at least, partly accomplished. For, when Louis of Condé entered the city, he was arrested by the followers of Guise, on a charge of participation in the conspiracy of Amboise. His brother, Anthony of Navarre, who accompanied him, was introduced into the presence of the king, where assassins stood ready to plunge their daggers into his bosom as soon as Francis should have given the appointed signal. The heart of the royal boy, however, revolted at the last moment from the contemplated murder, and Anthony survived that perilous interview. Very shortly afterwards Francis was mercifully removed, by a sudden death, from the snares which environed his path. His less happy brother, Charles IX., succeeded him.

This event was, in effect, a revolution. The Princes of Lorraine, no longer allied to the sovereign, retired into a comparative obscurity. Their contemplated massacre was postponed to the day of St. Bartholomew. Condé was discharged from prison, and absolved of his imputed crimes; Anthony of Navarre became Lieutenant General of France; Montmorency resumed his high office of Constable; and the Queen-mother, becoming Regent, governed the person and kingdom of her infant son.

The States General of Orleans, though not productive of any direct measure in favour of the Reformers, materially promoted the interest of the Reformation. They had recognised the great principle of religious tolerance, and had, therefore, given new courage to the disciples of Calvin. Ever watchful of such changes, Catherine of Medici once more presented herself in the character of a devout inquirer into the truth of the new opinions. The halls of her palace of Fontainebleau

were thrown open to a Huguenot preacher. "It seemed," says the Jesuit Maimbourg, "as though the whole court had become Calvinist. Though it was mid Lent, their tables were covered with meat, and they made sport of images and indulgences, of the worship of the Saints, of the ceremonies of the Church, and of the authority of the Pope." In the midst of such scenes the Reformers gave way to a not unnatural enthusiasm. Sometimes they addressed eulogies to the Queen-mother and the King of Navarre, and sometimes exhortations. Troops of missionaries from Geneva traversed the kingdom, and occupied the pulpits of France. Devotional and controversial writings were scattered from the Rhine to the Pyrenees as thickly as the leaves of autumn; and the more sanguine Huguenots believed in the approaching triumph of Calvin and his creed.

This exultation aroused the vigilance, and reanimated the hopes, of the Princes of Lorraine. The famous courtezan, Diana of Poitiers, was still living, the ready instrument of any intrigue; and, by her intervention, was cemented that memorable alliance to which the French historians gave the name of the "Catholic Triumvirate." The whole military strength of France was under the command of St. André, a dissolute soldier, and of Montmorency the constable. To each of them Diana proposed an alliance with Guise; to each were offered great pecuniary advantages; whilst, to stimulate the family pride of Montmorency, he was assiduously reminded of the welcome legend, that his great ancestor was the first baron and first Christian of France, and that he himself was, therefore, the hereditary defender of the faith and hierarchy of Rome.

29549

This new confederacy restored to the House of Lorraine the military strength of which the death of Francis had deprived them, and enabled Guise to re-appear, with renewed courage, in the royal council chamber. His returning influence there was speedily manifested. It gave occasion to the enactment of what was called the Edict of July, 1561,—an edict which bespoke his unrelenting, yet cautious, animosity to the Huguenots; for, while it forbade their public assemblies, it tolerated their private exercise of social worship, forbade all injuries against them on the ground of their religious opinions, and intimated a national council for adjusting the religious controversies by which the realm was agitated. Such a synod accordingly met at Poissy, within a month from the date of this edict.

The days of chivalry were giving place to the days of polemics, and the jousts of knights armed *cap-à-pie* were superseded by the theological tournaments of men of the gown. The one combat was, however, almost as unprofitable as the other. When the controversialists met at Poissy, they found all the most essential laws of their battlefield wholly undetermined, and incapable of any determination. What were to be the questions to which the debate was to be confined? The Huguenots insisted, that the whole compass of doctrinal opinion was to be open to attack and defence. The Catholics, that the authority of the Church, and the Real Presence, must be finally decided before any other point was handled. What was to be the test of faith? "Holy Scripture alone," exclaimed the reforming party. "Holy Scripture as interpreted by primæval traditions, and by the Fathers and Councils," rejoined the adherents of the Papacy. Who are to adjudicate the victory between the dis-

putants? "The Civil Government," answered the Calvinists. "The Hierarchy of the Church," replied their antagonists. To what good end then debate at all, in the face of such irreconcilable disputes as to the terms of the disputation? To that question the common answer of both parties was, we debate, not in the hope of conquering our antagonists, but in the belief that we shall encourage our friends; and we take this method of appealing, from our prejudiced opponents to the world at large, against the calumnies of which our persons are the objects, and by which our doctrines are daily misrepresented.

To the Doctors of the Sorbonne, indeed, such an appeal appeared eminently unwise. Twelve of them presented themselves before Catherine, at Poissy, with a protest against it. Such discussions, they said, did not tend to edification, and especially when carried on in presence of a king whose tender years made him so peculiarly obnoxious to error. "I have good reasons for what I have done," answered Catherine; "and it is too late to recede now; but (she added significantly) do not disturb yourselves, all will go well." It was a prophecy of which (in the sense of which it was made) she had taken good care to insure the fulfilment.

In the refectory of the great convent at Poissy, appeared therefore, on the 9th September, 1561, King Charles IX., a boy of eleven years of age, seated on his throne, having, on one side of him, the members of his family, the officers and ladies of his court; and, on the other side, six cardinals, with a vast array of bishops and of doctors. The boy-king addressed them in a formal speech; the Chancellor l'Hôpital in a conciliatory, wise, and almost Protestant, oration. At the close of these harangues, the Huguenots were, for the

first time, introduced. Twelve of them were ministers, and the remaining twenty-two, lay-deputies of the Calvinistic churches. Calvin himself was absent, because the French Court had refused to give the securities for his safety, which the Republic of Geneva had demanded. In his stead appeared Theodore Beza, at once the most intimate of his friends, and the most eminent of his disciples. Nor was it a substitution to be regretted by their adherents; for, however much inferior to Calvin in other respects, Beza far surpassed him in all the graces of elocution, and still retained the captivating amenity of manners for which he had been distinguished in his early years, and in the courtly circles in which those years had been passed.

The grave and simple habiliments of Beza and his associates contrasted strangely with the gorgeous apparel of their mitred antagonists. Nor were those humble looking men received into the presence of that royal and ecclesiastical pageantry as colleagues to deliberate on equal terms, but rather as culprits standing at the bar to undergo a trial. Undaunted by the indignity, Beza first knelt down, and audibly implored the divine blessing on the assemblage; and then, amidst the profound attention of his audience, proceeded to recite and to interpret the articles of the Calvinistic creed. His eloquence had been progressively winning a signal triumph, until it reached a passage in which, though admitting the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, he denied his bodily presence there. "His body," he exclaimed, "is as remote from bread and wine as heaven is remote from earth." Indignant clamours interrupted, though they did not eventually silence, the speaker; and, after an adjournment of seven days, the synod was again assembled to listen to the answer which, in the interval, had been

carefully prepared for the Cardinal of Lorraine. He maintained, with great applause, first, the supreme authority of the Church; and, secondly, the doctrine of transubstantiation; and concluded by demanding that, before the debate proceeded any further, his opponents should prove their candour by subscribing each of the two propositions which he had thus demonstrated. The demand was of course ineffectual. An insuperable obstacle to any further proceedings having thus been quickly, and perhaps fortunately, discovered, the synod was brought to an early and premature conclusion.

The theologians who had composed it remained, however, two weeks longer at Poissy, and held some private conferences there in a smaller chamber of the convent. Their meetings were productive of a few passages rather more exhilarating than either the theme itself, or the characters of those who handled it, might have seemed to promise. Thus, for example, the Cardinal of Lorraine tendered to Beza for his signature certain articles respecting the doctrine of transubstantiation extracted from the Confession of Augsburg, to which, therefore (sarcastically observed the Cardinal), there can of course be no objection. "Your eminence will therefore begin," answered Beza, "by attaching your own signature." "Not I," replied the Cardinal; "I am not bound to subscribe to the declarations of any master." "You will scarcely then expect us," rejoined Beza, "to accept the very confession which you have yourself rejected." Bossuet reproaches the Calvinistic disputant with escaping the dilemma by a subtlety. He might, with equal reason, have reproached the Cardinal for the subtlety with which he had attempted thus to avail himself of the dispute between the Lutheran and the Calvinistic Churches.

A far more formidable opponent than the Cardinal next presented himself in the person of Iago Laynez, the second general of the Jesuits, at once the most eloquent, learned, and astute of all those in union with whom Loyola had laid the foundation of his order. But, on this occasion, Laynez lost himself, like many a great orator before and since his time, in the mazes of a long and intractable metaphor; and afforded to Beza the triumph, so dangerous to the most eloquent adversary, of raising a general laugh at his expense.

Catherine listened to these debates with a secret contempt for the dispute and the disputants. She thought that they were contending about words only; and she inferred that they would consequently rejoice to terminate their warfare by a verbal compromise. At her instance, therefore, a formulary was prepared respecting the real presence in the Eucharist, with which Beza was reasonably, and the Cardinal of Lorraine indolently, satisfied. The Doctors of the Sorbonne, more learned and more sincere than the Cardinal, however, rejected it with indignation. And now rhetoric and learning, pleasantry and double-mindedness, having each in turn attempted to bring the interlocutors at Poissy to some agreement, and having all attempted it in vain, the meeting broke up. It had distinctly convinced most men that such a dispute could not be adjusted by any weapon less keen than the sword. To L'Hôpital and his partisans it had suggested the far more important conclusions, that, in such a dispute, neither the sword nor the pen could really gain a final victory, but that mutual forgiveness and toleration might render any such victory superfluous.

Yet, on the whole, the result of the synod or conference of Poissy was advantageous to the Calvinists. They had been publicly admitted into the presence of their sovereign to explain and to justify their doctrines. They had been heard with attention, if not with deference. The two religions had been allowed to stand so far on a footing of equality, that each had invoked in its support, not material force, but the reason of man illuminated by the written or unwritten revelations of God. In every part of France large accessions were consequently made to the number of the Reformers. Urgent demands for additional teachers were addressed to the Swiss and Genevese churches. Farel, now far advanced in years, re-appeared in his native country, and preached the Gospel to large and enthusiastic assemblages. In the immediate vicinity of Paris itself, Beza addressed congregations which his followers estimated as sometimes rising to 40,000 people, and which his enemies acknowledged to have been seldom less than 8,000. He even celebrated the marriage of the Count and Countess of Rohan, in the presence of the Queen of Navarre and of Condé; and Coligny presented to the Queen-mother a list of 2,150 reformed congregations, over each of which separate ministers presided. The numbers of the Huguenots at that time in France was believed by some to amount to a half, and, by the least sanguine, to a tenth, of the whole population of the realm. L'Hôpital is said to have inferred, from all the facts within his reach, that the population of the Huguenots to the Catholics was as one to three. But such calculations, or conjectures, must always, and everywhere, be delusive. They proceed upon two fundamental errors—the first, that every member of society holds *some* fixed and deliberate religious

belief; the second, that all who do not avowedly reject the established faith, are among its real adherents. But, all the world over, the formal assenters to that faith outnumber the avowed dissenters from it; and in religious, as well as in political, controversy, the world is ever governed by minorities.

Thus the Huguenot minority in France had become, at the close of the conferences of Poissy, effective enough to defy the laws which had been made against them, and to exact an amendment of the laws which had been made in their favour. They took possession of many of the churches of the Catholics, destroyed the relics, the images, and the crucifixes with which they were embellished; and demanded an enlargement of the privileges which had been granted to themselves by the edict of the Duke of Guise, of July, 1561. For, while that edict tolerated their private meetings, it forbade their public assemblies; and such a prohibition the Calvinists would no longer obey in practice, nor patiently endure in principle. The demand was successful. L'Hôpital, the ever zealous patron of religious liberty, proposed to an assembly of the Notables the enactment of a new law, which authorised the public celebration of the reformed worship on the easy conditions, that it did not take place within the walls of any fortified city—that the worshippers did not assemble in arms—and that they permitted the attendance of any officer of the Crown who might require to be present. On the other hand, it was provided that the Huguenots should restore the churches which they had usurped, and that they should not give scandal to the Catholics by breaking their images or crucifixes, or by any similar outrage. This law was called the Edict of

January, 1562. It was willingly registered by the parliaments in the south and west of France, and peremptorily rejected by the Parliament of Dijon. The Parliament of Paris at first refused to accept it, and accepted it at last, only in obedience to repeated and positive commands from the king, and not even then without a protest that they did so in submission to necessity, — without approving the new opinions, — and awaiting the time when it might be possible to make other and better arrangements on the subject. By the Huguenots themselves, the edict of January, 1562, was received with gratitude, or rather with exultation. Except that they were still excluded from public preaching within the fortifications of walled towns, they had at length, by many grievous sufferings, acquired whatever was necessary to the freedom of their worship, and to the diffusion of their doctrines. For such a victory they rightly judged that the lives of their martyred brethren had not been an excessive price.

Nothing, however, was more remote from the designs of the Triumvirate, than that they should enjoy that victory in peace. Calling to their aid Philip II. and the Papal legate, they now assailed the Huguenots on the most vulnerable point of their defences. It was their calamity to have been acting under the ostensible guidance and protection of Anthony of Navarre; and to detach him from their cause, weak and frivolous as he was, would be to transfer to the side of their enemies all the extensive powers with which that prince was invested, as Lieutenant General of the kingdom. To accomplish his conversion to the faith of Rome, it was requisite to appeal, neither to his understanding nor to his conscience, but simply to his egregious and well-known vanity. For this pur-

pose the highest dignitaries of Europe condescended to become parties to one of those farces in real life, which the French call mystifications. Anthony's dominant idea, and day-dream, was that of an exchange of his nominal sovereignty of Navarre for a real crown and real subjects. The Pope, therefore, tempted him with proposals for a divorce from Jane d'Albret, his wife, on the ground of her notorious heresy, that so he might be free to marry Mary, Queen of Scots, and in her right to reign over Scotland. Philip II. offered him the choice of a new kingdom, in Africa or Sardinia, or the restitution of Navarre itself. One easy but indispensable condition only must be first performed. He must embrace the faith and communion of the Holy See; and that this embarrassing measure might be reconciled to his royal honour, it was proposed that a conference of Huguenot and Catholic Doctors should be holden in his presence, when he might gracefully, and with dignity, surrender himself to the convictions which would naturally follow on the argumentative triumph of the advocates of the religion of his forefathers. Every act of this projected comedy was exactly performed, and the head of the House of Bourbon, the father of Henry IV., of France, gave to his son the example of purchasing a crown by the public abandonment of the faith of his early and of his mature life. The difference was, that the glittering prize actually rested on the brows of the son, while it only mocked the eager grasp of the father.

The secession of Anthony of Navarre gave to the Triumvirate a feeble ally indeed, but a great accession of power. It placed, at their disposal, the armies which obeyed him as Lieutenant General of France; and it disquieted their antagonists, by teaching them how precarious was the trust they habitually reposed in

princes. In all the presumptuous confidence inspired by these new resources, the Princes of Lorraine now bound themselves, by a traitorous treaty with Philip II., to concur in the introduction into France, and in the employment there, of the forces of Spain, for the extermination of heresy. To this compact, Anthony gave his sanction, and, in furtherance of it, he requested the Duke of Guise to join him in a meditated attack on the Huguenots in Paris.

On his way through Champagne for this purpose, the Duke, passing near Vassy, heard the ringing of the church bells of that little town; and, on inquiring about the cause, was answered that they were rung to call together the Huguenots to their religious exercises. "They shall soon," exclaimed the Duke, "Huguenotise (*Huguenotera*), in a very different manner." Then riding up to the place of meeting, followed by about 300 of his retainers, they fell on the unarmed congregation, killing three, and wounding others, of them. The Huguenots defended themselves with the stones lying on the ground before them; with one of which the Duke himself received a blow. In the indignation of the moment, he gave to his followers commands which they too well obeyed. At his bidding, and in his presence, they slew 60, and wounded 200, of the defenceless assembly. There was but little booty to be gained from such a foe; but a volume was found which, till then, the Duke had never seen. "Look," he exclaimed to his brother, the Cardinal of Lorraine, who had sheltered himself, during the slaughter, beneath an adjacent wall, "look, here is one of the books of these Huguenots." "There is no harm in this book," answered the Cardinal; "it is the Bible." "The Bible," replied the learned adversary of the new faith; "how can that be? You see it is not a year since

this book was published, and they say that the Bible was published more than 1500 years ago."

The massacre at Vassy, was a direct infringement of the Edict of January, 1562. It was a defiance of all law, by one of the chief nobles of France. It was an outrage so intolerable, and so full of menace, that if it should pass unpunished, there was an end to every hope of safety, or of peace. Condé solemnly denounced the author of it to the Queen-mother, as a murderer, a conspirator, and a traitor. Beza appealed to her for protection, and his flock invoked the aid of the governor of Paris—the Constable Montmorency. Catherine listened with terror, and answered with equivocations; while, with all the zeal of a renegade, Anthony of Navarre defended the conduct of the Duke, and apologised for the massacre. "Remember, sire," prophetically answered Beza, "that the Church is an anvil on which many a hammer has been broken."

Guise, however, was now irrevocably committed to a deadly strife with that invincible antagonist. Entering Paris amidst the acclamations of the fanatical multitude, who hailed him as a new Judas Maccabæus, he seized Catherine and Charles, and kept them in a strict though gentle captivity, first at Fontainebleau, and afterwards at Melun and Vincennes. The triumph of the Triumvirate and of their domestic and foreign allies was shortlived. It was a triumph promptly and fearfully expiated. With the massacre of Vassy and the seizure of the king, commenced the wars of religion; of all the dark tragedies which have been enacted in France, the darkest and the most disastrous. Agrippa d'Aubigné, a contemporary historian, in his review of these events, recapitulates, in the following indignant terms, the vindication of the Huguenots for plunging their country and

themselves into those dismal hostilities. "So long," he says, "as the adherents of the new religion were destroyed merely under the forms of law, they submitted themselves to the slaughter, and never raised a hand in their own defence against those injuries, cruel and iniquitous as they were. But when the public authorities and the magistracy, divesting themselves of the venerable aspect of justice, put daggers into the hands of the people, abandoning every man to the violence of his neighbours; and when public massacres were perpetrated to the sound of the drum and of the trumpet, who could forbid the unhappy sufferers to oppose hand to hand, and sword to sword, and to catch the contagion of a righteous fury, from a fury unrestrained by any sense of justice?"

If, as is but too probable, I shall appear to have been seduced by the preceding narrative from the problem which I proposed to myself at the commencement of this lecture, I can, for the present, only answer that it appears to me an indispensable preliminary to the solution of that problem. I do not think it possible to explain, intelligibly, why the protest made by so large a part of the people of France against the tyranny and the errors of the Roman Church, was not followed by any effectual resistance to the despotism of the reigning French dynasty, without first indicating what was the nature and what the principal stages of that great controversy. I hope to resume and to close that inquiry in my next succeeding lecture.

LECTURE XVI.

ON THE REFORMATION AND THE WARS OF RELIGION.

THE inquiry into the causes which rendered the Reformation incapable of securing the constitutional liberty of the French people has conducted me to the commencement of the wars of religion. The history of those wars yet remains to be written. If, indeed, you turn to the Abbé Anquetil's Esprit de la Ligue, you will find there a catalogue of writers who have contemplated those events in almost every conceivable point of view, and under the bias of every conceivable prepossession. But they have never yet been the subject of any comprehensive narrative informed by the research, and illuminated by the philosophy, which characterise the great historical authors of the present age. M. Mignet's promised work, the fruit of twenty-five laborious years, will, I trust, ere long supply that deficiency.

The historian of the wars of religion whenever he

shall appear, may perhaps consider them as comprising three distinct periods, each of which has an aspect, and a hero, peculiar to itself. The first would embrace the ten years which elapsed between the seizure of Orleans by Condé, in 1562, and the massacre of St. Bartholomew, in 1572—years memorable for the too successful treacheries of Catherine de Medici. The second period, commencing from that fearful tragedy, and terminating with the assassination of Henry III. in August, 1589, would exhibit the triumph and the fall of the great commander of the League, Henry, the second Duke of Guise. The third period would be that of the gallant struggle of Henry IV. against the Leaguers and their foreign allies, and would conclude with his purchase of the Crown of France by the abandonment of the faith to the defence of which his life had been so solemnly consecrated, both by his mother and by himself. On each of these epochs I have a few observations to offer.

First, then, the supposition that Catherine was a deliberate infidel, who had firmly rejected every religious creed, is supported by no proof, and is opposed to all probabilities. Fanaticism is the only disease of the human mind which could have so utterly extinguished in her bosom all the sympathies of the human heart. She must be supposed to have transcended all the known limits of the wickedness of our fallen race, if, during long years, she really meditated the crimes which signalise her name, without at the same time invoking the narcotic aid of some plausible sophistry. Doubtless she believed (for how common has ever been the belief?) that she was doing an acceptable service to God by the destruction of those whom she regarded as his enemies. Doubtless the

habitual profligacy of her life and manners was not really incompatible (for how often has such guilt been reconciled?) with an earnest desire to propitiate the Divine favour. She was at once a cruel, ambitious, dissolute woman, and a zealous Catholic.

Nothing, therefore, could be more grateful to her than the events of the first war, or campaign, which was closed by the peace of Amboise. In the eleven months over which it extended, both the Catholic and the Huguenot rivals of her favour had been overthrown. Guise had fallen at the siege of Orleans, by the hand of Poltrôt; Antony, king of Navarre, had been slain before the walls of Rouen; and, on the field of Dreux, St. André had lost his life. Montmorency had been captured by the troops of Condé, and Condé himself had been made a prisoner of war by the troops of Montmorency. When false tidings from the battle announced to her that the Calvinists had conquered, she calmly answered, "Well, then, we must say our prayers in French." When better intelligence assured her of the triumph of the Catholics, she still dressed her countenance in smiles, though with a more serious purpose.

Condé was in her power. In common with the whole race of Bourbon, he was the slave of disorderly passions; and, of that servitude, the Queen-mother well knew how to avail herself. He had relished the society of his Calvinistic brethren in arms very much as our Charles the Second had enjoyed that of the Covenanters in Scotland; and now spells were laid on him by the Armida of the French court, resembling those which, in a later age, were woven by the same court for that voluptuous member of the family of Stuart. She amused his captivity by splendid fêtes; she threw in his way temptations to more guilty

pleasures; and she fired his ambition with the promise of succeeding to the office of Lieutenant General of the kingdom, which the death of the King of Navarre had vacated. Such allurements proved irresistible. Regardless of the remonstrances of many of the captains, and of all the ministers of the Huguenot armies, Condé, as the head of their party, and in exercise of the general powers with which they had invested him, signed the treaty of Amboise. It gave to the Reformers a precarious peace, but it deprived them of the right which they held, under the Edict of January, 1562, of worshipping in public every where beyond the walls of fortified cities. Thenceforward they were to meet together for that purpose only in a single place within every bailliage of France which was inhabited by Protestant nobles and their retainers.

Yet Condé awaited in vain the promised wages of his infidelity. To have raised him to the office of Lieutenant General of France would have been to elevate him to a power not inferior to that of the Regent of the kingdom herself, and Catherine would hazard no such competition. She, therefore, caused the majority of Charles IX. to be announced in his 14th year; and a King reigning in his own right could not, of course (as it was urged), divide his authority, either with a Regent, or with a Lieutenant. Palpable as was the duplicity of such an evasion of her promises, Condé could not even yet escape the fascinations which the Queen-mother so well knew how to exercise over him. Gratified by other and less costly honours, he still took his place among the courtiers, and consented to preside at a meeting of the royal council, for the promulgation of an edict which abridged even the narrow concessions on the subject of public worship, which his own Treaty of Amboise had made in favour of the

Huguenots. After such an acquiescence Condé had ceased to be formidable; and he silently witnessed the departure of Catherine and her son on a royal progress, in which she meditated yet further encroachments on the hardly earned privileges of the reformed pastors and their flocks.

At Roussillon, accordingly, the name and the authority of Charles were employed for that purpose; and an edict of the 4th August, 1564, which took its title from that place, restrained the hitherto unlimited freedom of the worship of the Calvinists in private houses. Theirs was, at this time, the only power in the state which balanced that of the sovereigns; and both the ambition and the bigotry of Catherine demanded an absolute conquest of all such competitors. To insure it, she advanced with her son as far as Bayonne, where, as the representative of Philip II., the Duke of Alva awaited them; and with him she held long and secret consultations, the still extant records of which point, though darkly and dubiously, at the horrible catastrophe of St. Bartholomew. Whether the design was really then projected or not, it is, at least, certain, that astrology never scared mankind with a more sinister conjunction than that which thus, for the first and last time, brought into the presence of each other the three deadly persecutors of those times,—Italian, French, and Spanish.

The terrors inspired by that ill-omened meeting, and the resentment kindled by the successive violations of the Treaty of Amboise, stimulated the Huguenots to take up again the arms which, in submission to that treaty, they had reluctantly laid down. They addressed remonstrances, both to Condé and to Catherine. To him they complained of his desertion of their interests. Of her they demanded the exact

fulfilment of the terms of pacification. It was a demand to be evaded only by the weapons which never failed her,—by falsehood and by guile. "The time," she said, "had now arrived (I quote, not the words, but the substance of her answer), when, laying aside their dissensions with each other, Frenchmen should all unite in guarding the independence of their native land. Alva was marching along the eastern frontiers of France with an army which, though avowedly destined to repress the seditious Flemings, might turn aside to invade the dominions of the House of Valois. All faithful subjects of that house should, therefore, arm to avert such danger and disgrace from the noble kingdom, of which all were the common children." Such appeals were never made in vain to Frenchmen. The Huguenots offered to raise and arm, at their own expense, several regiments for the patriotic service. Coligny advised a direct breach with Philip, and the reunion to the Crown of France of its ancient fief of Flanders. The Queen-mother applauded their public spirit, but courteously declined their advice. "Without imposing on the adherents of the new religion any such heavy burden, she could herself (she said) levy and equip the forces demanded by the occasion." Such forces were, accordingly, summoned, and they thronged round the royal banner with all the alacrity of that warlike people. It was a controversial age; yet no religious differences disturbed the ranks of these zealous combatants—for no Huguenots had been admitted into them! While they believed that Catherine was arming against Spain, she had been bringing together an army of Catholics to act against themselves. Laying aside her mask, she hailed Alva as a deliverer, succoured him as an ally, and prepared to enforce, by his assistance, a new edict for the entire

suppression of the ritual and the faith of the Reformers.

The imminent danger roused them from their credulous reliance on the faithless Italian. Condé, awaking from his torpor, attempted, at the head of a hasty assemblage of his ancient followers, to seize the persons of the Queen-mother and her son at Monçeau, and, after pursuing them in their flight to Paris, found himself, on the 10th November, 1567, in the presence of the royal forces, under the command of the Constable Montmorency, on the great plain of St. Denys. In the sanguinary battle which followed the Catholics triumphed, but their leader fell; events, for each of which Catherine expressed an equal gratitude. Her dominion could no longer be disputed by any rival, for the constable had been the last survivor of the Triumvirate; nor could it henceforward be menaced by any religious faction, for the strength of the Huguenots, as she willingly believed, was for ever broken.

A few weeks revealed to her the vanity of this exultation. The force of the vanquished Reformers seemed to thrive upon defeat. Retreating towards the Meuse, the remnant of their shattered bands effected a junction with the German levies, which had marched to their support under the command of John Casimir, the son of the Elector Palatine; and, from one extremity of France to the other, the civil war again raged, but with redoubled fury. In turning over the dark records of that merciless age, the eye is painfully arrested by one most unwelcome incident. We may neither deny nor conceal that, in the city of Nismes, the Huguenots slaughtered, in cold blood, 120 Catholics, of whom no less than 72 were defenceless prisoners. It was, indeed, the act of a savage populace, against which their ministers and com-

manders expostulated in vain; but, after such an act, we cannot denounce the massacre of St. Bartholomew as a crime altogether without provocation, or without example.

It was, however, a crime which might, perhaps, have now been averted by the capture of Paris itself, if Condé, who had once more approached and straitened the city, had not once more also been the victim of Italian intrigue. With the courage which never failed her, Catherine herself appeared in his camp; there to verify the customary boast, that her tongue and her pen were more than a match for the lances of her enemies. Never had that tongue been more profuse of blandishments, or more successful. "She came the messenger of peace to heal the wounds of their bleeding country. For that end, what sacrifice she asked could be excessive? An amnesty for all the past offences, an unconditional acquiescence in all their present demands, were the only terms she could propose to the loyal, though misguided, subjects of her son; and guilty, indeed (she argued), would be the ambition which should induce their chiefs to incur the responsibility of rejecting such proposals, and of protracting such a war." It no longer rested with those chiefs to refuse or to accept them. At the voice of the syren, their followers rapidly disbanded; and on the 20th March, 1568, the mere letter of her promises was fulfilled by the signature of a new act of pacification. From the place at which it was signed, it was called the Treaty of Longjumeau; but, from the jesters of the times, it received the more appropriate name of the *traité boiteux et mal assise*—one of the negotiators having been lame, and the other having borne the name of Malassise. Mèzerai dismisses it with the more serious remark, that it left the Hugue-

nots to the mercy of their enemies, with no better guarantee than the word of an Italian woman.

But though the Treaty of Longjumeau added nothing to the real security of the Reformers, it effectually accomplished the real purpose of the Queen-mother. It raised the threatened blockade and siege of Paris, and it dispersed the too credulous Calvinists and their commanders. But it neither crushed nor dispirited them. To Condé and Coligny, and to their followers, La Rochelle afforded an impregnable defence, and there they negotiated with Elizabeth for supplies both of forces and of money.

The time had, however, now arrived, when, by one vigorous effort, Catherine might not unreasonably hope to bring these protracted hostilities to a close. Weakened by their own precipitate disbandment, and abandoned by their German auxiliaries, the Huguenots could no longer contend on equal terms with the royal armies, supported as they were by the zealous co-operation both of the Spanish and the Papal Crowns. The Queen-mother, on the other hand, relieved by the death of the aged Montmorency from the incumbrance of his unskilful command, might now kindle the flame of French chivalry, and gratify her own feelings, by placing the conduct of the war in the hands of the Duke of Anjou, her third and favourite son, then a youth in his eighteenth year; while, to avert the dangers of his inexperience, Strozzi, an officer of some celebrity as the leader of Italian Condottieri, might be appointed to superintend and guide his operations in the field.

The campaign of 1569 was opened with these hopes, and, ere long, the justice of them was triumphantly vindicated. On the 16th of March of that year, Condé fell in the battle of Jarnac, after

witnessing the defeat of the forces under his orders. The body of the prince was treated with base indignities by Anjou. His conduct of the Protestant cause passed as a melancholy, and, as it seemed, an undisputed inheritance to Coligny; when another, and still more celebrated, member of the House of Bourbon appeared as his successful competitor.

At the town of Saintes, then the head-quarters of the Huguenots, Jane d'Albret presented herself, leading by either hand a boy, each of whom she came to devote to the sacred cause in which Condé had just fallen. One of those youths was his own son, and was now the heir of his title. The other, Henry of Bearn, was the son of Jane herself, and of her deceased husband, Antoine, King of Navarre. Though he had not yet completed his fifteenth year, the Calvinistic troops hailed him with acclamations as their general-in-chief and as the protector of their churches. The gallant boy welcomed the perilous commission, and answered by an oath to persevere in the struggle for religious liberty, until either death or victory should have brought the contest to a close.

Victory, however, was long to be wooed in vain by Henry of Navarre. Within a few weeks from his solemn vow and self-dedication, the hostile armies met on the field of Montcontour. Of all the combats of the Huguenots it was the most disastrous. Not more than 8000 of them escaped, leaving behind them more than twice that number of their comrades, either killed or prisoners, and carrying with them Coligny himself, covered with wounds and overwhelmed with sorrow. D'Andelot, his brother, was amongst the slain. A reward of 50,000 crowns was offered for his own head. His house was burnt, his

estates pillaged, the wreck of his forces were in mutiny, and a large number of his friends had both abandoned and reproached him. In the midst of these troubles, and within a fortnight from the loss of the battle, he raised himself from his sick bed to write the following letter to his children:—"We will not (he said to them) repose our hopes on any of those things in which the world confides, but will seek for something better than our eyes can see, or our hands can handle. We will follow in the steps of Christ our commander. Man, it is true, has deprived us of all that man can take away, and, as such is the good pleasure of God, we will be satisfied and happy. Our consolation is, that we have not provoked these injuries by doing any wrong to those who have injured us, but that I have drawn upon me their hatred by having been employed by God for the defence and assistance of his Church. I will, therefore, add nothing more except that, in His name, I admonish and adjure you to persevere undauntedly in your studies, and in the practice of every Christian virtue."

While Coligny was drawing these lessons of parental wisdom from his defeat, it was celebrated with rapturous exultation at Paris and Madrid, and with Te Deums at Rome. But scarcely had those triumphant strains died away, before the indomitable Huguenot was approaching the gates of Paris at the head of an army still more numerous, and better appointed, than that which had been overthrown at Montcontour. At the tidings of that disaster, the mountaineers of the south and east of France, and the auxiliaries of Germany, had crowded to his standard, and the commander who, but a few months before, had witnessed the annihilation of his army,

was now preparing the blockade of his enemies in their capital. Against such undying energy, Catherine could contend no longer, and, on the 8th of August, 1570, she assented to the treaty of St. Germains, which not only restored to the Huguenots the freedom of public worship, but placed in their keeping four cities (in the immediate vicinity of their resources and allies) to serve as a guarantee for their peaceable enjoyment of their new privileges.

Within two years and sixteen days from the treaty of St. Germains, Coligny himself was assassinated, and the streets of Paris were deformed by the slaughtered bodies of the victims of the day of St. Bartholomew. If we rely on Davila, that treaty was signed by Catherine as a means of alluring the heretics into her toils, and of devoting them to the extermination which he says had been so often meditated, and so often postponed. But Davila is the constant dupe of his own subtlety, and of his belief that the avowed and the real motives of Princes can never be the same. The hypothesis that the massacre was the result of so protracted a series of artifices, is certainly gratuitous, and is, I think, incredible.

In August, 1570, Catherine had many motives for a sincere reconciliation with the Huguenots. They had proved themselves invincible, and yet there was no longer any reason to dread that they would be victorious. They had invariably been defeated in the field. Their numbers had diminished, and were still diminishing. Except to the south of the Loire, they were everywhere in a decided minority. Even there they were chiefly composed of the territorial lords and their rural retainers. The civic populations of France were almost exclusively Catholic. Paris

was their intrenched camp, their arsenal, and their treasury.

But over Paris and in the other great cities of the kingdom, the House of Guise was rapidly regaining the influence which had raised them, in the reign of Francis II., to a dominion resembling that of the ancient mayors of the palace. Unless she could balance that power, Catherine had but little security for retaining her own, and an alliance with Coligny and his followers promised her that advantage with but little apparent hazard.

Charles himself was the heir of the ambition of his grandfather, Francis I. To gratify it he had but to anticipate the policy of Richelieu, by placing himself at the head of the Protestant against the Austrian powers of Europe. In that position he might regain for his crown the ancient French fief of Flanders; the whole population of which, in revolt against Philip II., were passionately invoking his aid, and proffering to him their allegiance. But to that end the zealous support of his Protestant subjects was indispensable.

With such motives for fair dealing, why suppose Charles and his mother to have been treacherous? Or if we imagine that truth could never find harbour in her bosom, even when it would best promote her selfish purposes, how shall we explain the events which actually followed the treaty of St. Germains? It is not a conjecture, but a fact beyond all dispute, that Coligny urged on Charles the policy of acquiring Flanders by a declaration of war against Philip, and that Charles listened to that advice with his characteristic eagerness. Active diplomatic communications followed with the Protestant princes of Germany. A secret convention pledged the French king to supply

succours to Louis of Nassau. Privateers were fitted out at La Rochelle against the fleets of Spain. Ships of war were stationed off the coast of Brittany, to intercept the succours destined for the relief of Alva, and an army was sent to the north of France with the same apparent object. A new edict was made to prevent the interference of the Catholics with the education of the children of Protestants. Coligny was indemnified for all his losses in the war. Marguerite, the sister of Charles, was given in marriage to Henry of Navarre; and Charles himself, rejecting the offered hand of the daughter of Philip, wedded a German princess. To ascribe all these acts not to the obvious motive of gratifying the ambition of a young and high-spirited prince, but to the desire of blinding the eyes of the Huguenots to the fate impending over them, is an error into which no one will fall who has had to do with public affairs, not merely as a commentator, but as an agent in them; for, to every such man, how often and how clearly has the secret been revealed, that the world is governed by improvisations and by improvisatori, not by prescient calculations, nor by far-sighted diviners of futurity?

Doubtless, however, the massacre of St. Bartholomew was a crime committed by Catherine, and her sons, and her councillors, deliberately and with premeditation. Nor is it difficult, at least, to conjecture why or when the tide of her favour towards her new Protestant allies first became refluent. When, in the spring of 1572, the approaching marriage of Henry of Navarre and Marguerite had filled Paris with the adherents of both religions, the agents of Philip drew the attention of the Queen-mother to a danger to which she seems to have till then been insensible. They informed her that, in the secret deliberations

about the affairs of the Netherlands, to which Coligny had been admitted by Charles, he had counselled the young king to emancipate himself from the thraldom in which she held him, and that measures were in progress for removing her from any further participation in the government of France. They bade her observe how universal was the enthusiasm of the capital in favour of the ancient faith and ritual; and how rancorous the antipathy with which the citizens regarded the innovators on it. They pointed out to her how her own and her son's attachment to the person of Coligny, and, as it was suspected, to his cause, was rapidly destroying their popularity, and elevating the Princes of Lorraine to a power which would soon become too formidable for restraint; and they appear to have succeeded in convincing her, that the only condition on which she could prolong her reign in France was that of employing the House of Guise and the Catholics as her agents to crush the Huguenots, that so she might at once predominate, and triumph, over both. The documents of that time (so far as I have any acquaintance with them) seem to me to trace with sufficient clearness to such considerations as these, the departure of Catherine, in August 1572, from the policy which, in August 1570, had dictated the treaty of St. Germains. Although the methods taken at last to assemble the whole Huguenot aristocracy at Paris, and so bring them within her power, may indicate that she cherished an insidious design against them during some weeks before the actual perpetration of the massacre, we need not suppose it to have been preceded by a deliberate hypocrisy, maintained during two whole years of avowed and seeming friendship.

It is for the credit of us all not to exaggerate the

darkness of a crime which has left so foul and indelible a disgrace upon our common nature. For horrible as was the act itself, the subsequent celebration of it was even yet more revolting. Pope Gregory XIII. and his cardinals went in procession to the church of St. Mark, not to deprecate in sackcloth and ashes the divine vengeance on a guilty people, but "to render solemn thanksgivings to God, the infinitely great and good (such is the contemporary record) for the great mercy which he had vouchsafed to the see of Rome and to the whole Christian world." A picture of the massacre was added to the embellishments of the Vatican, and by the pontiff's order a golden medal was struck, to commemorate to all ages the triumph of the Church over her enemies. The Pope found meet companions of his joy among the players. In all the cities of France they frequently exhibited a tragedy called the death of Coligny, in which he and his brother D' Andelôt were represented enduring the fearful torments, and cherishing the malignant passions, with which the imagination of Dante has arrayed the place of future punishment.

Burdened as the heart is with the remembrance that the princes who executed this butchery, that the priests who thanked God for it in their masses, that the mimes who chuckled over it in their ribaldry, and that the crowds who night after night applauded them, were all our brethren, reflecting to us in their actual guilt our own possible criminality, I know not whether the apology which some recent French historians have offered for their ancestors be not even yet more offensive. It is, they tell us, a mere prejudice to blame any one. Man is but the creature of the age in which he lives. He is borne onwards by the irresistible current of events, the sport of a fatality

with which it is not given him to contend, the helpless victim of those passions which infect and agitate the social system of which he happens to be a member. This doctrine which a great historian of the French revolution brought to light to shelter its atrocities, has been adopted by meaner, though not unpopular, hands to reconcile us to those of St. Bartholomew. It is sufficient to answer, if indeed to such profane extravagance any answer be due, that if fate compelled Catherine and her sons and their subjects to commit such offences, and constrained Pope Gregory XIII. and his cardinals to celebrate them with festive adorations, the same inexorable fate imposes upon us the necessity of holding their deeds and their memories in everlasting abhorrence. The invocation of this stern deity from the Homeric Hades can never shed any real light over the ways of this upper world. Instead of affording a real or a plausible solution of the mysteries which surround us, it does at best but incumber the attempt to resolve them by the interposition of an unmeaning word. It is one of those many refuges of lies, the real purpose of which is to dethrone the Creator from the moral government of his creation.

With the massacre of St. Bartholomew closes the first of the three periods of the wars of religion. The era of treacheries was now to give place to the era of conspiracies,—the dominion of Catherine to the supremacy of Henry, Duke of Guise. France may be considered as having, henceforward, resolved itself into four encampments, sometimes warring, sometimes intriguing, with each other; but each maintaining a separate policy, and aiming at distinct objects.

First. The Huguenots acknowledging, as their joint chiefs, Henry of Navarre and his cousin, the younger

Condé, were composed of two dissimilar sections,—the Consistoriaux and the Gentilshommes. The Consistoriaux comprised nearly all the Calvinistic ministers and their disciples of low degree. They had associated themselves together with the single object of vindicating their freedom of private conscience and public worship. They took up arms, even for that purpose, slowly and with reluctance; but they were not less reluctant to lay them down again until it had been accomplished. The Gentilshommes, on the other hand, were men of rank and fortune, with whom *Huguenoterie* was a family religion, a party watch-word, or a point of honour, but was seldom able to triumph over their selfish interests, or personal ambition.

Secondly. The Politiques had, originally, been combined together as a party by the Chancellor l'Hôpital; and, after his disappearance from the world, they regarded as their chief Damville, the governor of Languedoc, the second of the three sons of the Constable Montmorency. The Politiques all professed the religion of Rome, but were desirous, by mutual toleration, to unite all Frenchmen to each other, and to engage them all in resistance to the Papal despotism. They numbered, in their ranks, the governors of several provinces, a large part of the magistracy, and some ministers of the royal council, who abhorred the carnage of St. Bartholomew, and were indignant at the degradation into which the Court of France had fallen.

Thirdly. The Catholic League was a union, under the presidency of Henry, Duke of Guise, of many local societies, which had been formed in some of the chief cities of France, for the defence of the ancient faith. But the purposes of these associations, when thus combined together, acquired a precision and an

audacity unknown to the designs of any of those separate bodies. The credit, or responsibility, of having thus matured so many different projects into one great and consistent conspiracy, belongs to David, an advocate, who, in the year 1576, proposed to Pope Gregory XIII. a plan, which that pontiff ultimately sanctioned, and promised to reconcile to the consciences of the people of France. It was nothing less than the deposition of the House of Valois in favour of the House of Guise, on condition of their engaging to annul all edicts of toleration,—to exterminate all forms of heresy,—to accept the decrees of the Council of Trent,—to acknowledge their own spiritual allegiance to the Papacy,—and to obtain, from the States General of France, a similar acknowledgment. Even in the commission of such a treason, the advocate could not renounce his professional solicitude to be fortified by legal arguments, and David, therefore, conducted Gregory to the desired conclusion, by the following chain of reasoning:—

First; Pepin, he said, had acquired the Crown of France from the donation of Pope Zachary. Secondly; together with that temporal right, Zachary had conferred upon Pepin an apostolical benediction. Thirdly; Hugues Capet had, six hundred years before, usurped the secular sovereignty which his descendants still retained. But, fourthly, neither he nor they had inherited, or could usurp, the apostolical benediction which was indispensable to the spiritual character of every legitimate dynasty. Fifthly; the right of the successors of St. Peter to confer that benediction, and with it that spiritual character and legitimate power, was indefeasible and impresçriptible. Sixthly; it was their duty to confer it on the most worthy. Seventhly; the

superiority of desert plainly belonged to Henry, Duke of Guise; and, finally, if Gregory would bestow on him the spiritual title to the French Crown, the mere temporal right must follow as a comparatively unimportant but inseparable accessory.

Of David's biography I know nothing, but it seems impossible that so astute a lawyer should have missed of distinction in the Palais de Justice. His esoteric doctrines were long reserved for those who were initiated into the higher mysteries of the League. His exoteric teaching was propagated in the form of an act of association, through almost every province, city, and hamlet of France. Many different forms of it, indeed, seem to have been in use, but in each of them the subscribers bound themselves by three distinct pledges,—the first, to assist all the other members of the confederacy,—the second, to render an absolute obedience to its chief,—and the third, to devote every thing, life itself included, to the extermination of the heretics, and to the exclusion from France of every religion other than that of the Holy Catholic Apostolic and Roman See.

There was no age, or sex, or profession, or trade, or rank in France which did not contribute many members to this Holy League. But foremost in zeal were the Clergy. The bishop and chapter of every cathedral, the abbot and monks of every monastery, the brethren of every religious order, and the incumbents of every parish church, were organised into a compact spiritual militia, with garrisons in every city, and detachments in every village of the kingdom, ever ready to animate the zealous and to rebuke the languid in the same sacred cause, and to cheer, with

assurances of present pardon and future peace, every one who hazarded his life in defence of it.

Second only to the Clerical, were the Civic, partisans of the League; and, amongst all cities, Paris was pre-eminent for her devotedness. The ancient corporate institutions of the capital became the basis of the new political or religious organisation. The prévôts of the merchants in their respective districts became lieutenants of the League in each. Every guild resolved itself into a committee for promoting the success of that holy alliance. The Dixaniers, or officers of the town guard, were all placed at the head of companies, which might be convened at the first sound of the tocsin. The Quarteniers, or chiefs of the sixteen quarters of Paris, had each the command of a regiment of Leaguers; and the *Sections*, to which, in a later age, the revolutionary leaders gave so fearful a celebrity, were called into action for the first time, not by them, but by the Leaguers of the 16th century.

Religious enthusiasm, though the most active, was not the single principle of their association. Their leaders were skilful to touch all the chords to which the plebeian mind habitually vibrates; and they did not attempt the subversion of an ancient dynasty by the hands of the people without themselves cultivating the character and the arts of demagogues; a character which no magnanimous man will ever assume, and arts which no honest man will ever practise. Although neither magnanimous nor honest, or rather because he was neither, Guise excelled all men in the power of winning the popular confidence, and of controling the popular will. Gifted with illustrious hereditary rank, a noble presence, a frank and courteous bearing, invincible courage, sympathy,

or the semblance of sympathy, with the suffering many against the prosperous few, and prodigal without stint in promises of reform, he was the favourite courtier of the multitudes who, from his lips, eagerly accepted their accustomed tribute of lavish flattery addressed to themselves, and of bitter invective directed against their superiors. Proposing to become the Napoleon, he commenced by becoming the Mirabeau of his generation. The League, therefore, under his orders, distributed manifestoes echoing all the grievances of the States General. It demanded, not merely an absolute unity of religion in France, but the abolition of taxes, the independence of the Parliaments, and triennial States General. It became a great Democratic Confederacy for the overthrow, not merely of the heresies of the Huguenots, but of many of the prerogatives of the royal house, and of many privileges of the seigniorial families.

And yet some of the noblest of those families contributed to increase both the power and the numbers of the confederates. By joining their ranks, the Dukes of Nevers, Mercœur, Aumâle, and Elbeuf, with a long list of inferior grandees, rose to military commands, to civic governments, and to offices of emolument. Nor were there wanting magistrates of eminent wisdom, nor even men of undisputed moral worth, to impart to the League the weight of their judicial authority, and of their personal virtues.

The most efficient allies, however, of Guise and his followers were the Pontiffs who, in that age, occupied the chair of St. Peter. That Gregory XIII., who had chanted eucharistic masses in honour of the darkest crime which stains the annals of Christendom, should have been the willing dupe of the sophisms of the advocate David is not surprising; but from his suc-

cessor, Sixtus V., better things might not unreasonably have been expected, for he holds no mean rank among the magnanimous princes who, at no infrequent intervals, have worn the papal tiara. The amusing account of his life by Gregorio Leti, which most of us may have read either in Italian or in English, must be considered rather as a romance than as a history; for the biographer of Sixtus lacked, either the diligence to study, or the capacity to appreciate, the elevation and the dignity of his hero. Though no canonised Thaumaturgist, Sixtus wrought architectural miracles, which to this hour astonish and delight every visitor of Rome, and is celebrated by Ranke as among the wisest of the legislators, and the most vigorous of the administrators, by whom the Ecclesiastical States have been governed. He was a celebrated preacher, a laborious scholar, and a liberal patron of literature; and the edition of the Holy Scriptures, which was printed during his reign at his own press, was throughout corrected by his own hand. He laboured at the internal reformation of the Church over which he presided; and the best attestation of his personal worth and piety is, that he enjoyed the affection and esteem of St. Charles of Borromeo. And yet, such is the power of our corrupt passions when engaged in any cause which is supposed to sanctify the indulgence of them, that Sixtus encouraged and applauded, and became responsible for, crimes which "might have wounded the conscience of a buccaneer."

In Philip II. of Spain the Leaguers had yet another associate, whose zeal for their cause burnt fiercely, though his attachment to their persons and to their political principles was but equivocal. In his letters, for the publication of which the world is

indebted to M. Capefigue, he exhibits himself in a character for a resemblance to which all the preceding history of mankind may be retraced in vain, till we ascend to the morose and gloomy solitude of Tiberius at Capreæ. From his silent retreat at St. Lorenzo, Philip contemplated the outer world in a spirit in which the dark melancholy of Johanna, and the boundless ambition of Charles, his two immediate predecessors, were combined with the marble hearted fanaticism and the austere devotion of St. Dominic, to the maintenance of whose institutes he and they had been devoted. Endowed with unrivalled wealth, and power, and talents, and constancy of purpose, he employed them all to establish the two cardinal principles by which, as he judged, this fair world and every province of it ought to be governed; the one, the absolute dominion of the See of Rome in all spiritual matters, the other the absolute dominion of the Crown in all secular affairs. To use, or to assert, the right of private judgment, was treason against the Tiara. To refuse a passive and implicit obedience to the prince, was treason against the Diadem. To those ecclesiastical and temporal chiefs, and to them alone, it belonged to direct the conduct of mankind. To all other men it belonged only to submit themselves to that supreme guidance. The tide of mental and political freedom was rising on every side around him, and to their proud waves he opposed the stern and inflexible resistance of those maxims, boldly asserted in theory, and as boldly reduced to practice.

The democratic tendencies of the Holy League had, therefore, excited the jealousy of Philip, even while he aided with complacency the death struggles in which it was engaged with Protestantism. And thus

it happened that, while lavish in promises to the confederates, he actually afforded them his support with wary and hesitating steps. His true design may clearly be traced in his correspondence. It was first to unite the Leaguers and the King for the destruction of the Huguenots in France, and then to enlist them both in his own more comprehensive project, of exterminating all the heretics in Europe, by a union of the Catholic powers, acting under his own direction in the cabinet, and under the command of Alexander Farnese, and his other generals, in the field.

Far as the event fell short of his anticipations, they were not wholly unfulfilled. But his success was purchased at the expense of the imperishable hatred of his own name, of the debasement of his descendants, and of the degradation which from that age to our own has overspread his once prosperous and formidable kingdom.

The fourth and last of the parties into which France was divided, was composed of the king, the queen-mother, and the adherents of their court. It is difficult to characterise this body without touching on topics on which it is irksome to dwell, and the particular mention of which might involve some impropriety. Charles IX. had died within a few months from the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and it seems more charitable with his enemies to believe, than with his partisans to deny, that his last hours were consumed in agonies of remorse. Henry III., his brother and successor, excited equal wonder by his superstition and his licentiousness. Sometimes he might be seen traversing the streets as a flagellant, with bare head and feet, and with shoulders which afforded the most unequivocal proofs that his whip had not fallen on them idly or in sport. At other

times he would join a religious procession, accompanied by Sibillot his favourite fool, who parodied, in grotesque antics and irreverent songs, the ceremonial and the chants of that devout solemnity. The next hour would find him bestowing the most costly and extravagant favours on the youths by whom he was surrounded, or outraging not only the dignity of his crown, but the decorous gravity of manhood, by the exaggeration, in his own person, of their debauched manners and effeminate appearance; or even descending so low as to amuse them by assuming female attire, and representing before them equivocal female characters. And yet, among these lawless revellers (Mignons was the name they familiarly bore), were many who, with all the light-hearted gallantry of their native land, could dally with danger and with death on the field of battle; and two of them, the Dukes de Joyeuse and d'Epernon, rose to eminence both as military commanders and as statesmen.

Catherine, the queen-mother, though in the decline of life, retained all her ancient passion for power, for treachery, and for intrigue. But, adapting her machinations to the now diminished authority of the Crown, she won adherents to the royal cause by the same shameful arts in which the Princes of Midian were instructed by the Chaldean prophet. Followed by a train of maids of honour, than whom no ladies ever less merited that title, she used them as her too ready instruments of seducing those whom she could not otherwise subdue, not scrupling to spread such toils even for her own son-in-law, Henry, the brave but too ductile and self-indulgent King of Navarre.

The history of France, during the second period of the wars of religion, is composed of the intrigues

and conflicts by which these four parties, the Huguenots, the Politiques, the League, and the Court, endeavoured to deceive, to conciliate, or to conquer one another. The successive involutions of their policy are developed in the annals of their age, with a rapidity like that with which the scenes are shifted in a mimic theatre. At one time the Huguenots alone successfully resist the royal arms. Then, entering into a traitorous conspiracy with each other, the Huguenots and the Politiques establish a state within the state, and by their combined forces extort from the king an almost unconditional acquiescence in their joint demands. The next act of the drama finds the Crown and the Politiques allied against the Huguenots, and compelling them to surrender most of their recently acquired privileges. The League now appears on the crowded stage, constraining the Court to subscribe a compact with them, for the utter extirpation of heretics and of heresy from the land. The papal thunders are then heard in the distance, excommunicating "the bastard and detestable race of the Bourbons," and depriving them of the succession to the Crown of France,—an insult which Henry of Navarre answers by the destruction of the Catholic army at Coutras, while Guise avenges that loss by overwhelming the Protestant army of German auxiliaries. Those events are followed by the barricades of Paris, the flight of the king to Chartres, his humiliations at that city, the second States General of Blois, and the assassination of Guise, by the command and in the presence of his sovereign. The Royalists, the Politiques, and the Huguenots, then forming a temporary alliance, assemble a vast army for the capture of Paris, and the annihilation of the

League. But at that critical moment the knife of the monk Jaques Clement retaliates the murder of Guise by the assassination of his royal murderer, and changes the whole conduct and character of the war. In that age of terror, the deed excited but little abhorrence, though even that iron generation must have been appalled to hear that Pope Sixtus V., calling himself the vicar of Christ on earth, had, in the full consistory at Rome, hazarded the frightful avowal, that he regarded the self-devotion and martyrdom of Clement as admitting of no unequal comparison with the self-sacrifice which had been endured at Calvary.

The House of Valois was now extinct. Those bloody and deceitful men had not lived out half their days. Henry II. perished in the prime of life by the lance of Montgomery. His eldest son, Francis II., did not complete his nineteenth year. The unhappy Charles IX., his second son, had not reached the age of twenty-four when he died, in strange and fearful torments. At the same early period, the Duke d'Alencon, the fourth son of Henry, fell a victim to intemperance. Henry III., his only other son, was assassinated in his thirty-eighth year. Francis of Guise met the same fate, while in the full vigour of his manhood; and Henry of Guise had not accomplished his thirty-seventh year, when he, also, was struck down by the daggers of hired murderers. It was not without an intelligible and an awful purpose, that a retributive providence thus openly rebuked the persecutors of their brethren: and yet the condemnation which impartial history must pronounce on all the later sovereigns of the House of Valois may, perhaps, be justly mitigated by the belief, that the madness of their predecessor, Charles VI., was, to some

extent, hereditary in his race. It is a welcome escape from conclusions hardly otherwise to be avoided, but which the reverence due to our common humanity must make every one anxious to avoid.

The third and last period of the wars of religion belongs to the military, rather than to the civil, annals of France. It has been sung by the French Virgil, in the French Æneid; and they who have read the Henriade (if, indeed, any of us can honestly say that they ever did or could read it) would hardly endure a prosaic account of that merciless controversy. Despite all the enthusiasm of Voltaire, I must, however, doubt whether his Æneas was really a great captain; and I regard it as beyond all dispute, that his story, like that of his Trojan prototype, is rather disfigured than embellished by the Didos who occupy so conspicuous a place in it. But no wit or genius can ever rescue the real catastrophe of the French epic from shame, and regret, and indignation.

Henry IV. had been trained in the Calvinistic creed by his mother, Jane d'Albret. D'Aubigné, who knew her well, says of her, that though perfectly feminine in every other respect, she possessed a masculine intrepidity of soul; that her capacity was equal to the most arduous duties, and her heart invincible by the greatest calamities. Her son was the heir of her courage and her understanding, but not of her devotion or her constancy. The early impressions of her maternal love and wisdom were, probably, never altogether obliterated from his mind, even by the habitual licentiousness both of his early, and of his mature, life. Yet such licence never was, and never can be, associated with the faith which prepares man, by self-conquest, to become the conqueror of the world. So far as any real religious

convictions can be ascribed to Henry, he seems to have been a Protestant to the last; but that no such convictions had a very firm hold on his mind is the inference to be drawn from almost every passage of his life. When at last he preferred the abandonment of his creed to the loss of his crown, it may perhaps have appeared to himself, as it evidently did to his friends, that he was rather incurring an imputation on his honour as a gentleman, than inflicting a wound on his conscience as a Christian. To this day the apostasy is defended, and the dishonour denied, by many of his countrymen, on grounds against which a protest must be made by every one to whom truth and integrity are something better than empty words.

"Consider," it is said, "the consequences which hung on his decision. By adhering to the Reformed Church, he must have prolonged the most disastrous of all civil wars—he must have seen the dismemberment of France between the League and Philip II. —he must himself have been superseded in favour of the Duke of Mayenne, by the States General whom the Duke had convened at Paris—he must thus have abdicated the throne of the Bourbons to the House of Guise—and must have delivered up the Huguenots as defenceless victims to the bigotry of the Leaguers and their head. On the other hand, by returning to the bosom of the Church of Rome, Henry, "proceed his apologists," had the certainty, not only of escaping these dangers, but of restoring peace to his kingdom, of transmitting the Crown to his posterity, and of securing toleration to his ancient Protestant adherents. With what reason or humanity," they ask, "could he, in the prospect of such consequences, persist any longer in maintaining a religious creed,

and observing an ecclesiastical ritual, to which, after all, he had never given more than a hesitating and thoughtless preference?"

To the question thus stated may first be opposed another question,—What is the depth of criminality thus imputed to Henry IV. by those who represent him as conducting, during many successive years, the most deadly civil war recorded in the History of Christendom for the establishment of a religion to which neither his heart, nor his understanding, yielded any genuine allegiance? His accusers have never raised so heavy an accusation against him as is thus preferred by his apologists. The reverence due to the memory of so great a man, and all the probabilities of the case, require us to reject the hypothesis that he was an hypocrite, even when leading the Huguenots in the fields of Coutras and of Ivry. His real responsibility is, that of having acted on the belief that, by disavowing his faith, he would best promote the interests of his people, of his descendants, and of himself. His error was that of elevating the human above the Divine prescience, and of claiming for the foresight of man an higher authority than for the immutable laws of God. Doubtless it was not without some plausible sophistry that he reconciled to himself so wilful, and so solemn, a departure from the sacred obligations of truth. Doubtless he believed it to be, on the whole, expedient for others and for himself. But that it was really inexpedient we know, because we know that, by the divine law, it was unequivocally forbidden.

What the future history of France would have been if Henry had clung to his integrity, is known only to the Omniscient; but, with the annals of France in our hands, we have no difficulty in per-

ceiving that the day of his impious, because pretended, conversion was among the *dies nefasti* of his country.

It restored peace, indeed, to that bleeding land, and it gave to himself an undisputed reign of seventeen years; but he found them years replete with cares and terrors, and disgraced by many shameful vices, and at last abruptly terminated by the dagger of an assassin. It rescued France, indeed, from the evils of a disputed succession, but it consigned her to two centuries of despotism and misgovernment. It transmitted the Crown, indeed, to seven in succession of the posterity of Henry, but of them one died on the scaffold, three were deposed by insurrections of their subjects, one has left a name pursued by unmitigated and undying infamy, and another lived and died in a monastic melancholy, the feeble slave of his own minister. The grandson of Henry, Louis XIV., amidst the splendours which surrounded him, may appear to have been a brilliant exception from the dark fatality which waited on the other sovereigns of the House of Bourbon; but even he, by the licentiousness of his personal habits, by the arbitrary system of his government, by his wild extravagance, by his iniquitous wars, and by his remorseless persecutions, paved the downward path to the ruin of his name, of his dynasty, and of his race. If any prophetic voice could have disclosed to Henry the events really depending on his purchase of his Crown by apostasy, would that purchase have been made? If he had sought for guidance in the sacred book, which was the corner-stone of the faith he abandoned, would it not have reminded him, that "the lip of truth shall be established for ever, but that a lying tongue is but for a moment?"

It must not, however, be forgotten, that one of the

results of Henry's renunciation of the reformed faith was glorious to himself, and was, for a time, eminently advantageous to his people. It enabled him, in April 1598, to promulgate the Edict of Nantes—the great charter of Protestantism in France. It commenced by an acknowledgment that God was adored and worshipped by all the French people, if not in the same forms, yet with the same intentions; and it was then declared to be a perpetual and irrevocable law, the chief foundation of the union and tranquillity of the State—First, that all men should enjoy, in private, full liberty of conscience—Secondly, that the free public celebration of the Protestant worship should, in all future times, be permitted in every place in which it had been actually celebrated, immediately before the date of that edict—Thirdly, that all superior lords might hold meetings for public worship within the precincts of their chateaux; and that every inferior gentleman might receive as many as thirty visitors at his domestic worship—Fourthly, that the Protestants should participate in all the benefits of public employments, schools, hospitals, and charities—Fifthly, that they should possess five academies for the education of youth—Sixthly, that they might convene and hold national synods—and, Seventhly, that they should occupy several fortified cities, for securing to them the faithful observance of these concessions. That they were ill observed is indeed true, and that at length the grandson of Henry revoked his "perpetual and irrevocable" law, is also true. Yet, during eighty-seven years, it remained the measure and the rule, if not the effectual bulwark, of the rights of the Protestant population of France.

How then (to resume the question with which I

commenced my last preceding lecture) did it happen, that the protest made by so large a part of that population, against the spiritual tyranny of the Roman Church, was not followed by any effectual resistance to the despotism of the Bourbon Dynasty? The details with which I have hitherto detained you will now, I trust, enable me to bring into a narrow compass my answer to that inquiry.

That answer in general is, that the Reformation was unproductive of civil liberty in France, because the Reformed Church in that country was never able to attain to more than a temporary and precarious toleration. The more precise answer, in my judgment at least, is, that this ill success is to be attributed to the eight following causes: —

First. The Calvinistic type which Protestantism assumed in France, was alien from the national character. While yet a novelty, indeed, it was also a fashion. To sing the hymns of Marot in the Pré aux Clercs, or to join the multitude which thronged the pulpit of Theodore Beza, was the *mode* in a country where that capricious power has ever erected the chief seat of her dominion. But, ere long, the national spirit reasserted its indefeasible authority. Turning away from the cold, unimpressive worship of Geneva, the great, the noble, and the rich, followed by the crowd which usually follows them, joined again in theatrical processions to the shrines of their patron saints, and knelt as before around the altars, where the dramatic solemnities of the mass were celebrated amidst clouds of incense, and strains of sacred harmony. In religion, as in every thing else, the craving of the French mind for spectacle, for representation, and for effect, is, and ever has been, insatiable.

Secondly. The Calvinistic system was distinguished from that of all the other reformed churches, by the extent to which it rejected ecclesiastical tradition, and erected the whole superstructure of belief and worship on the Holy Scriptures, as interpreted by Calvin himself. Not content to sever those bonds which, reaching back to the most remote Christian antiquity, should hold together the churches of every age in one indissoluble society, he imposed on his disciples, and on their spiritual progeny in all future times, other bonds, wrought by himself from his study of the Bible, and embracing the whole compass, not of theology alone, but of moral philosophy also. His Christian Institutes claimed and acquired for a season, in his Church, an empire resembling that which the logic and ethics of Aristotle had so long enjoyed in the schools. But Calvin was not an Aristotle. His vivacious, inquisitive, sceptical fellow-countrymen were not school men. Ere many years had passed, they became impatient of the dogmatism even of their great patriarch himself. By attempting to bring all moral science within the sphere of theology, and by converting scientific principles into articles of faith, he had exposed to the attacks of that ingenious and versatile people, a long line of positions, many of which, even when found to be defenceless, could not be abandoned with safety to the rest. The reaction which took place, hurried the insurgents from one extreme to the other. Servetus may be said to have at length obtained his revenge. The doctrines for which he died were widely diffused throughout the churches founded by the author of his death. For, in the history of Calvinism in France, we have the most impressive of all illustrations of the truth, that no Christian society can sever itself from the ancient

and once universal commonwealth of the Christian Church, except at the imminent risk of sacrificing the essence of Christianity to the spirit of independence. The Socinianism of the later Protestant Church of France was at once the proof of its inherent weakness, and the cause of its further decline.

Thirdly. The Reformation in France became comparatively barren of constitutional freedom and of its other legitimate fruits, because the Reformed Church there soon and widely departed from its appropriate character, to assume the office of a party in the State. The alliance of the Huguenots with the Politiques was fatal at once to the religious discipline of the former, and to their personal sanctity. Their preachers foresaw the contaminating influence of that association, and earnestly, but vainly, dissuaded it. Thus the treaty of Milhau, of December, 1573, between the Protestants and Politiques, was little, if at all, less than a deliberate treason. Thus, also, the still more intimate connection between the Consistoriaux and the Gentilshommes, in the ranks of the Huguenots themselves, was formed at a grievous detriment to the severer virtues by which the early Reformers had been distinguished. It is the testimony of a writer of their own age and party, that the flame of piety among the Calvinists had been effectually extinguished by the dissolute and scandalous examples of their more worldly associates, and that debauchery advanced and overflowed among them far and wide, like an uncontrollable torrent.

Fourthly. The virtue, and with it the energy and the success, of the Protestants was further impaired, by the seductions to which their chiefs and leaders were exposed from their too frequent contact with Catherine and her court. Rank, office, and all the

other allurements of royal patronage, were employed to shake their fidelity; and Mèzerai asserts that more Huguenots were converted in four years by these methods, than had been induced to abandon their religion in forty years by the terrors of the scaffold and of the sword.

Fifthly. Even yet more fatal to the religious spirit, and, therefore, to the moral and political influence, of the Huguenots, were the sanguinary habits they contracted during many years of civil warfare. The atrocities of that dark era were not confined to the Catholics. As the contest proceeded, the parties on either side became gradually bereft, not only of the spirit of Christianity, but of the feelings of our common humanity; while the moral sense was paralysed, if not deadened, by the sight and the perpetration of remorseless cruelties. To men stained with such crimes, however sorely provoked to the commission of them, it was not given to raise aloft the cross of the Redeemer, and to announce the tidings of peace and reconciliation. By the lips of such heralds, even the Gospel itself was proclaimed in vain.

Sixthly. The relations between the Huguenot Church and the State being always those of antagonists, there subsisted between them no alliance to arrest that instability of religious opinions to which independent ecclesiastical bodies are so much addicted, or to infuse into the body politic those principles of social equality, and of mental freedom, by which the Protestant Churches are habitually distinguished.

Seventhly. It was the error and the misfortune of the French Protestants to confide the conduct of their cause to the Princes of the House of Bourbon. The first of them, Anthony of Navarre, deserted

and betrayed it in the visionary hope, that the Triumvirate would reward him by the exchange of his nominal crown for a real sovereignty. His brother, Louis de Condé, deserted and betrayed it in the persuasion, that Catherine would confer upon him the office of lieutenant-general of France. The younger Condé deserted and betrayed it to rescue his life from the assassins of St. Bartholomew. Henry IV. twice abjured the Protestant creed, first for the preservation of his life, and then for the preservation of his Crown. These treacheries of the four Bourbons, whom the Huguenots followed in the civil wars, were only less fatal to their interests than the unrelenting persecutions of the three Bourbons, who successively occupied the French throne between the death of Henry IV. and the accession of Louis XVI. For,

Eighthly. It is to the persecutions to which the Protestants were exposed from the time of their first appearance in the city of Meaux, till the near approach of the French Revolution, that we must chiefly ascribe their failure to acquire the authority and influence necessary to their propagation of constitutional liberty in France. The story of these persecutions, so merciless, so unrelenting, and so continuous, fills vast volumes which have been dedicated to the memory of the sufferers, by the martyrologists of their own party. It is a story which no man would either willingly read, or repeat, or even abbreviate. It exhibits our common nature in its most offensive aspect. It pervades every era of the French annals. It assumes every conceivable form of cruelty and injustice, and many forms inconceivable to the darkest imagination, unaided by an actual knowledge of those horrible details. If the most terrific act of this prolonged tra-

gedy was the massacre of St. Bartholomew, the most revolting was the Dragonnades of Louis XIV. Catherine and her son had, at least, the excuse of believing that the enemies they destroyed were dangerous to their own safety, and their offence was not committed under the veil of any eminent devotion. Madame de Maintenon and her husband, on the other hand, neither felt, nor affected to feel, any dread of the myriads of helpless victims whom they impoverished, banished, imprisoned, and destroyed. But it was at the bidding of their confessors—with the cordial support of their priesthood—with prayers continually on their lips—and in the name of the Prince of Peace, that they daily offered up these human sacrifices. The blood of the martyrs has, indeed, been the seed of the Church, but not when the hearts of the persecutors have been sufficiently steeled against all lassitude, compunction, and remorse. In almost every part of Europe, which at this day acknowledges the spiritual dominion of the Papacy, the sword, the scourge, the brand, and the axe, wielded by the secular powers, under the guidance of their spiritual advisers, have effectually arrested the progress of the Reformation. In France, those weapons were but too successfully employed, by the Houses of Valois and of Bourbon, to crush religious liberty, and with it to eradicate the seeds of constitutional freedom. But they were also, however, unconsciously employed to prepare the way for the convulsions by which two whole generations of mankind have been unceasingly agitated, and by which the Capetian Dynasty has again and again been subverted from its once immovable foundations.

LECTURE XVII.

ON THE POWER OF THE PEN IN FRANCE.

At the commencement of these lectures I observed, that it was the high office of History to trace out the progress of public opinion in moulding the character and the condition of the nations; and I added, that, to indicate some of the steps of that progress in France, was the arduous task which I had ventured to propose to myself. It is, indeed, a task so arduous, that I ought perhaps to apologise for undertaking it at all. The leisure and the studies of a whole life would scarcely be sufficient for following the course of a few only of the many confluent streams by which the current of opinion was fed and swollen, as it shaped out the destinies of the French people. Who, indeed, shall undertake, with any confidence, to determine what were the political views, or what the moral sentiments, most widely diffused among them at each successive epoch of their national life? Or who

will pretend to such skill in the science of moral analytics, as to be able to resolve into their elements, the motives by which they were actuated, or the judgments by which they were guided, at even any one solitary period of the long centuries of their political existence? If the secrets of any single bosom baffle the keenest human scrutiny, how may we hope to penetrate the mysteries of those great social movements, in the production of which the wills of myriads, if not of millions, of independent agents were concurring?

I answer, that all we can expect, and perhaps all that we can desire, is to approximate to the true solution of these enigmas; and that, though nothing less than Omniscience can completely resolve them, yet the faculties entrusted to ordinary men may be sufficient to ascertain both what have been the predominant propensities of a great people during the growth and development of their power, and in what sources such national characteristics have chiefly originated. The foremost minds of France have, at all times, been not only the zealous authors, but the faithful interpreters also, of the thoughts and purposes of their successive generations. In the darkest, not less than in the brightest, seasons, a voice exhorting, guiding, and animating the French people, was ever raised—by the Church, through her ministers, and in her ministrations—by the Parliaments, through their illustrious magistrates—by the States General, through their patriotic leaders—and especially by Literature, through those master spirits who laboured, from one age to another, to enrich, to accumulate, and to transmit the intellectual patrimony of their own and of all succeeding times. It was, indeed, a voice which gave utterance to many discordant

lessons; sometimes inculcating either the sacred truths and laws of our most holy faith, or the received doctrines of moral and political philosophy, or the sense of honour, or the love of country; and, on other occasions, teaching either a fatal Pyrrhonism, or an insatiable thirst for military glory and aggrandisement, or inexorable national antipathies, or ignoble superstitions, or religious errors. But whatever might be the teaching of those whom, at successive epochs, France acknowledged as her spiritual and mental rulers, that teaching was never really ineffectual. It gradually moulded the mind of her people, and governed their resolutions. It fostered, when it did not create, in them much of that traditional character, at once so admirable in its beauties, and in its deformities so revolting. The husbandry bestowed on the hearts and on the understandings of Frenchmen, has ever been prolific of an abundant harvest. Their faults are not, and never have been, those of men abandoned to the untutored instincts and brute appetites of nature. Even in the wildest paroxysms of revolution and bloodshed, they have, for example, invariably and passionately maintained, that the commonwealth is constituted not for the advancement of material interests merely, but for higher and nobler, though too often, indeed, for impracticable, ends. They have frequently been subjected to the tyranny of the imagination. Sheer nonsense, in the masquerade of sublime abstractions, has continually ruled over them. They have bowed down to other tyrannies far baser and more oppressive than those. But, as a people, they have never taken Mammon for their God. They have not allowed the cares of life to annihilate its healthful illusions, or to poison its blameless delights. They have ever rendered a voluntary, or an unconscious,

allegiance to those dominant minds of their nation, who have ruled by force of reason or eloquence, of wit or genius, justly or unjustly ascribed to them by the suffrages of the multitude.

He, therefore, who would interpret the fate of the dynasties and of the people of France, must study her political, by the light of her ecclesiastical, forensic, and literary history. I need scarcely disavow any such ambitious purpose. My aim is far more humble. I design merely to throw out some passing suggestions on the influence exercised over the civil government and polity of that kingdom,—not either by the Church, the Parliaments, or the States General, nor even by Literature in general,—but by some eminent men of letters. Among the countless authors to whose labours that influence may be more or less truly referred, I shall select a few only. But those few will be such as, from time to time, attained to a literary supremacy in their native land. To notice the rest, is to me, at least, as impossible as it would be superfluous. For all the writers who have in turns been elevated to the dictatorship of the Republic of Letters in France have a family resemblance, which attests their mental consanguinity. By means of that resemblance, their descent may be readily traced. Theirs is a lineage which, commencing with the patriarchs of remote ages, is perpetuated in the Guizots, the Cousins, and the Lamartines of our own days. If we can seize the generic character of that imperial race, we shall sufficiently understand the nature of the impulses which, in successive ages, they have given to public opinion, partly by their own personal exertions, and partly by those of their imitators and disciples.

The literature of France is of a much earlier date than French literature. From the days of Charle-

magne to those of St. Louis, a long series of French authors traversed the whole circle of the sciences; but they employed for that purpose, not French, but either classical, or scholastic, or rustic Latin. It is, indeed, only in deference to a national prejudice, as unfounded as it is inveterate, that I place Charlemagne and his learned courtiers among Frenchmen. The founders of each of the two imperial dynasties were both aliens from France. Charlemagne was in every sense of the word a German, as Napoleon was, in almost every sense, an Italian; and the school over which Alcuin presided at Aix la Chapelle was no more Gallican, than the academy founded by Richelieu at Paris was Teutonic.

The rustic Latin (or Roman, as it was called) of France was scarcely the same language to the north and to the south of the Loire. It was engrafted by the victorious Romans, after the age of Cæsar, on the aboriginal tongues spoken on either side of that river. But in Cæsar's time those tongues were themselves widely dissimilar. In the Celtic and Belgic provinces of Gaul there then prevailed different dialects of that widely diffused speech, which is at this day in use in Ireland, in Wales, in the North of Scotland, and in Brittany. In Aquitaine, on the other hand, both the vocabulary and the grammar were, at that period, Iberian rather than Gallic. There, also, the Greek of Marseilles and of the adjacent Ionian colonies, and the Arabic of the Saracenic invaders, each in turn left copious and rich deposits, both of words and of constructions; and the half-civilised Goths of Aquitaine contributed far more than the barbarous Franks of Neustria or Austrasia, to ennoble and enlarge the popular speech of the nations among which they had respectively settled. For these reasons, and for others which I

cannot now pause to mention, the rustic Latin of the North was a comparatively meagre and unformed tongue, while the rustic Latin of the South was a tongue comparatively affluent, graceful, and expressive. The northern variety passed into modern French. The southern, or Romance dialect became the language of poetry and of the Troubadours. It was at length swept away under the desolating crusades which so nearly exterminated the populations of Provence and Languedoc.

I do not turn aside from my path to attempt any estimate of the influence of the Romance poetry on the character and polity of the French people, partly because that poetry is signalised by no one great and imperishable work, and partly because the problem has been so recently, and so completely, solved by M. Fauriel in his Histoire de la Poësie Provençale. He is one of those writers of whom his country may be justly proud. Under a weight of erudition, beneath which most men would stagger, he moves with the graceful ease which might seem to belong only to the lighter sports of fancy; while all the comprehensive and intricate principles at his command are evolved with that exquisite skill, the distinctive character of which is to hide itself in its own perfection. M. Fauriel is of course an enthusiast in his pursuit, for that was necessary to the success of it; but his enthusiasm has, unhappily, too much the mastery of him. He has always a smile, if not an apology, at hand for the moral delinquencies of his heroines and his heroes; and is, I think, never once moved to reprobate that systematic contempt for conjugal fidelity, by which the amatory strains he celebrates are habitually warmed and animated. I fully admit that the provinces of the moralist and of the critic are not the same; but I cannot admit that any man,

and least of all that any man of genius, may, with impunity to his own mind, or without injury to the minds of others, treat with indifference even in his critical capacity, the eternal distinctions between good and evil.

In proportion to our reverence for that sacred priesthood who, by eucharistic sacrifices of half-inspired verse, celebrate from one generation to another the works and ways of the Creator, joining, each according to his vocation and his gifts, in the unbroken chorus of meditation, of love, of gladness, or of resignation, which perpetually ascends from earth to heaven—in that same proportion will, I believe, be our distaste for the lyrics of the Troubadours. I know not, indeed, of any social phenomena more remarkable, than that there should have been found in any country a constant succession of men, and of men of no vulgar stamp, who, during more than a century and a half, sang their life-long changes on the same narrow round of amatory thoughts and fancies; and that, throughout all that time, such bards should have still found a ceaseless throng of admirers to follow and to extol them. Not even the magic of M. Fauriel's style seems to me sufficient to rescue the perusal of his specimens of these interminable love songs from disgust and lassitude. The spirit they breathe is so false, fictitious, and artificial, that their grace and wit are insufficient (at least in my judgment) to redeem them from aversion, and even from contempt. On a former occasion, I hazarded the opinion, that the connection was neither fortuitous nor obscure, but providential and significant, between the national character to which the Provençal poetry bears witness, and the destruction of the race for whose delight it was written, and by whose applauses it was rewarded.

But while in Southern France the most cultivated intellects were whiling away their existence under the narcotic influence of such strains as these, accompanied as they were by all the embellishments of music and the dance, a far sterner discipline was preparing the cultivators of letters in the North for that momentous controversy which was to be carried on there in the 12th century, upon some of those great questions which the most closely affect the present duties of mankind and their eternal prospects. The preparation for that debate had been made long before by many illustrious scholars of the Benedictine order, and especially by one of them whose name I cannot pass over in silence, although his writings have long since been laid aside and forgotten.

About the middle of the 10th century was living, at the monastery of St. Gerauld, in Auvergne, a youth, of whose future eminence the abbot of that house had formed the highest hopes. His name was Gerbert; and, for the completion of his studies, the abbot (in what we should now call the spirit of an extreme liberality) sent him to Seville and Cordova, where Arabian teachers instructed their pupils in geometry, astronomy, arithmetic, and algebra. From those celebrated schools, Gerbert returned to France to earn the reputation of a sorcerer. That he was concerting with Satan some unhallowed designs which the heart of man ought not to conceive, and which the tongue of man could not utter, was a belief not unnaturally drawn from the mysterious characters, the cabalistic signs, the groups of constellations, and the lines sloping in all directions, and meeting at all angles, which his hand was continually tracing. Or, if any reasonable doubt had existed, who could resist conviction when informed, as the world was widely in-

formed, that while Gerbert was predicting all future events, and ascertaining all that had passed in former times, foul demons, in the form of gigantic bats, had been seen to envelope him in their sable wings.

And yet Gerbert rose to be first a minister in the cathedral church of Rheims, and then to be the archbishop of that see. But his love of knowledge was insatiable, and to indulge it he resigned his mitre, and visited the schools of Italy. There his fame reached the ears of the emperor, Otho the Great, by whose influence he became archbishop of Ravenna; until at length, under the name of Silvester II., he ascended the papal throne. The belief in his magical powers seems to have gathered strength by this last advancement; and, as far as can now be ascertained or conjectured, it must be confessed, that the spells by which he wrought were, indeed, marvellous. An eloquent and pathetic writer, he stirred up the Pisans to the first expedition ever undertaken, by the powers of the West, for the defence of the pilgrims visiting the Holy Sepulchre. He studied and wrote upon antiquities, poetry, grammar, and logic. He is said to have taught the use of lofty and sharp-pointed poles as lightning conductors; and he was the author of many books, which are reported to be still in the Royal Library of Paris. One of these, called Rythmomachia, is described as containing a comparison between the Arabic numerals and the algebraic symbols, as far as relates to their respective uses, functions, and powers. In another we are told, that he explained, geometrically, the science of harmonics, the structure of clocks, and the various methods of working the keys of the organ, by water or by wind. Of his private life nothing, I believe, is recorded. But enough remains to show that, in that dark age, there was one French-

man who had the heroism to cherish, and the genius to execute, the design of combining in his own person a twofold supremacy, and of reigning at once over the ecclesiastical, and the scientific, commonwealths of Christendom.

In the 12th century, however, the darkness of those times was to pass away. In that memorable age may be discerned the budding of the most prolific of those ideas, which were to yield their fruit at the era of the Reformation, and of the revival of letters. Commerce and the arts, philosophy and literature, then began to emerge from the shadows by which they had been so long enveloped. Then was the period of transition, from the mediæval barbarism to the modern civilisation,—the crisis at which light and order first began to penetrate and to organise the preceding chaos. It was in that dawn of the intellectual and social renovation of a yet distant period that France first asserted her claim to be the chief instrument of Providence in civilising the European world. Her own monarchy had now become firmly settled in the Capetian race. She had taken the chief conduct of the Eastern crusades—the stormy source, as we have seen, of personal freedom, of political and military organisation, of commerce, and of learning. Her name had become familiar and formidable throughout the limits of the ancient empire; and her arms had already diffused, beyond her own shores, some knowledge of her language. It was still, however, imperfectly formed; and was unfit (at least in the judgment of her greatest men) for literary uses. The rustic Latin of the South had, indeed, been dedicated to such uses by the Troubadours. But, in the north, the rustic Latin, or French, was still superseded by the Latin of ancient

Rome, as often as men sought to impart or to acquire learning, or philosophy, whether theological or secular.

The throne of philosophy was then filled by a Frenchman, whose name has ever since occupied one of the foremost places in the literary annals of France. William, the son of a peasant of Champeaux, a town in Brie, was, in that age, a teacher of theology and logic to a crowd of students, who daily gathered round his chair in the cloisters of Notre Dame. Among them was a young Breton, whose short, feeble, and attenuated frame contrasted strangely with a countenance of which the expression (enthusiastic and voluptuous by turns) seemed to announce an habitual conflict between his spiritual and his sensual nature. At one time he poured out, for the delight of his companions, songs of his own composition, or charmed them by his jovial mirth, or entranced them by his mellifluous colloquial eloquence. At another, he startled and repelled them by a demeanour vehement, unsocial, and abrupt. Though still young, he had travelled far; passing, as a kind of philosophical Quixote, through every land in which glory was to be won in dialectic tilts and tournaments. The youth, whose temperament was at once so joyous, and irritable, and aspiring, could not long submit himself to the authority of the grave William of Champeaux.

Abandoning his master, Abeillard, or Abélard (for such was the name won for him by his honeyed discourse) established first at Melun, and then at Corbeil, a school of his own; where, such was the throng, and such the eager curiosity of his pupils, that they were content, during the season of his lectures, to dwell in huts rudely composed of reeds and mud. With characteristic self-reliance, Abélard commenced

his academic course, by declaring war on the doctrines of his former master; and as William of Champeaux had taught Realism, he announced himself as a devoted opponent of that doctrine. From Corbeil he returned to Paris; and there, taking his place on the mount, and in the gardens of Ste. Geneviève, he is said to have explained, to no less than 3000 scholars, each in turn of the philosophical systems of his age.

But philosophy was not his only pursuit. Fulbert, a canon of the church of Paris, inhabited a house in one of the islands of the Seine, where dwelt with him his niece Loise, or Héloise; a damsel who, although she had not yet completed her seventeenth year, was passionately devoted to the pursuit of such knowledge as was then held in the highest esteem in the world of letters. At the mature age of forty, Abélard, then in holy orders, became the guest of Fulbert, and the teacher and seducer of Eloise. With virtue they abandoned tranquillity and peace; and the revolting tale, on which romance and poetry have lavished so many meretricious ornaments, is not an idle fiction, but a melancholy truth.

In his subsequent seclusion, first at the Oratory of the Paraclete, and then at St. Gildas, in Brittany, Abélard resumed the office of a prælector, and became the great interpreter, in France, of the philosophical ideas of his own generation. In common with the other schoolmen of that day, it was his office to analyse the truths of Holy Writ by the logic of Aristotle, and to explicate them by the aid of Aristotle's moral and metaphysical doctrines. He was also the author of some books, of which a full account may be seen in the twelfth volume of the Histoire Littéraire de France. The most remarkable of them are said to be the "Hexameron," an allegorical review of the

creation, and of the order of the material universe; and a book on self-knowledge, in which the author is charged with having taught, in its vilest form, the epicurean opinion, that the soul is exempt from all taint and all responsibility, whatever may be the excesses of the merely animal appetites.

I know nothing of the truth, or falsehood, of that imputation, for the book in question is not contained in the only series of the works of Abélard with which I have any acquaintance. I refer to the collection of them which was published, in 1836, by M. Cousin, under the authority of M. Guizot, then the minister of public instruction in France, and which first made known to the world two of the most remarkable and characteristic of Abélard's writings.

I have said that he was a devoted opponent of Realism; but you will not suppose that I am about to deviate into that great controversy. I advert to Abélard's contribution to it chiefly as illustrative of the remarks which I shall hereafter have to make on the identity of the spirit of the most eminent philosophers of France, in ages the most remote from each other. How much there was in common between Abélard and his great successors, Montaigne, Bayle, and Blaise Pascal, may however be in some measure inferred, even from the following brief notice of his war with the Realists.

In his essay "De Generibus et Speciebus," Abélard ascribes to his master, William of Champeaux, and generally to the Realists of his times, a doctrine, which may perhaps be sufficiently understood from the following specimen or illustration of it, with which he amused his readers and himself.

"Like all other universals, Humanity is a thing essentially one and indivisible. If to that one thing

there accedes a certain congeries of forms, the result is to produce the individual man, Socrates. The accession to Humanity of another assemblage of forms, produces the man Plato. The Socratic forms and the Platonic forms may be totally dissimilar; but beneath that diversity of species is veiled an absolute identity of genus. The same universal man lives in both, though he be enveloped in each by different integuments."

To this doctrine, or rather to this illustration of the Realist doctrine, Abélard answers: "First. If Plato be at Rome, and Socrates at Athens, then the universal man, who is common to them both, must be at the same moment at Athens and at Rome; that is, he must be in two places at once.

"Secondly. The universal man, who has taken to himself the forms of Socrates, is inseparable from those forms. Wherever that universal man is, there also, consequently, must Socrates be. Therefore Socrates is at the same moment at Athens, and at every other place at which the universal man is present, under the forms of any other individual than Socrates himself.

"Thirdly. As the universal man is the latent substratum of the forms of all individual men, it follows that wherever *any* man is found, there also is to be found *every* man. Indeed it is evident, that there is, after all, but one man in the world, who is appearing at each moment in some hundreds of millions of dissimilar aspects, and in as many separate places.

"Fourthly. As the Socratic and the Platonic forms accede to and embrace, not merely the universal *man*, but also the universal *animal*, it is evident that if that animal be sick in Socrates, he must at the same time be sick in Plato; and so, if there be any one sick man, the whole world must be one vast hospital.

"Finally. Seeing that the universal animal, under the species of certain living things, is rational, and, under the species of other living things, is irrational, and yet is alike enveloped, and alike alive in each of those things, there is no escaping the consequence that every animal is at once rational and irrational."

The *argumentum a cachinatione* in this case, as in most cases, proves little more than the vivacity of him who uses it. The Voltaire of the 12th century, like his great antitype of the 18th, was, however, not content to laugh down systems of belief, without building up others in their room. But while contending with Realism, he was unwilling to espouse the antagonist theory of the Nominalists, or to assert with them, that all universals, Humanity for example, or Animality, were mere words. In the judgment of his age, and, I suppose, in his own judgment, that doctrine was irreconcilably opposed to many articles of the creed of the Church. That it was really opposed to the article of transubstantiation, seems indeed to admit of no doubt whatever. Every consistent Roman Catholic is a Realist. To avoid the reproach of heresy therefore, or perhaps for yet better reasons, Abélard devised that compromise between the contending parties to which metaphysicians have given the name of "Conceptionism." If universals were neither real entities, nor mere words, they must be so many conceptions of the mind. Even, therefore, if it be admitted that there is no substantive reality, except in individuals, yet, between different individuals, there are various resemblances and analogies which the mind observes and classifies. To the classes so formed, and to them alone, Abélard maintained that the characters either of genera, or of species, properly belonged.

M. Cousin, who has most luminously explained this compromise, thinks that, by means of it, Abélard rather evaded than solved the difficulty; and that, either unconsciously, or covertly, he was to the last, in the proper sense of the word, a Nominalist. I do not presume to express an opinion on this very subtle question; but from Abélard's treatise, called "Sic et Non," I cannot but surmise, that though the supposed tendency of Nominalism to subvert the foundations of the Christian faith might render him very reluctant to avow himself a Nominalist, it might not really much indispose him to the acceptance of that philosophy.

The words "sic et non" might, perhaps, be best rendered into English by our homely phrase, *See-saw*. The Benedictines, and especially the excellent and learned D'Achery, had a copy of the book, which they laid aside as unfit for publication. I respect the firmer faith in the invulnerability of truth, which has induced M. Cousin to give it to the world, as I admire the charity with which that most eminent philosopher would reconcile Abélard's character as a sincere Christian and an honest man with his publication of such a treatise. M. Cousin regards it as a collection of theological problems, or contradictions, designed to fortify the mind by a salutary scepticism against the acceptance of any narrow and precipitate solutions, and so to prepare it for solutions of a more solid and durable nature. "The scepticism of Abélard," says his editor, "was merely provisional. He proposed, at some later period, to reconcile the contradictions which he thus brought together, and, by the power of logic, to reclaim men from doubt to faith and orthodoxy." That such was the real though unavowed design it is at least pleasant to believe, and who would refuse himself that pleasure, when

assured by such a critic that he may legitimately indulge it. But, apart from that assurance, I confess that I should have thought that, in this case, a less favourable conclusion was inevitable.

In the Prologus of the "Sic et Non," Abélard insists on the difficulty of rightly understanding either the Scriptures or the Fathers, and he traces it to eight distinct causes. These are, first—the peculiarities of their style—secondly, their employment, on scientific subjects, not of scientific, but of popular language—thirdly, the corruption of the text—fourthly, the number of spurious books—fifthly, the frequent retractations by the Fathers of their own previous statements—sixthly, their careless use of their profane learning—seventhly, their habit of describing things, not as they really are, but as they appear, and as they are supposed by the vulgar to be—and, eighthly, their repeated use of the same words in two or more different senses. He advises that, when the apparent contradictions of the Scriptures cannot be explained by any of these considerations, we should abandon the manuscripts as inaccurate, and that we should draw a broad distinction—between the canonical Scriptures, "in which everything is of necessity true," and all other ecclesiastical writings—between the apostolical and all other scriptures—and between the sacred text and all comments upon it.

Then, proceeding to establish the existence of these alleged contradictions, Abélard proposes a series of questions ranging nearly over the whole compass of theology and morals, and sets himself to show under each, that opposite or inconsistent answers to it may be drawn from the Holy Scriptures, or from the Fathers, or from both. Of those questions, the following are examples:—

"Quod non sit Deus singularis; et contra.—Quod sit Deus tripartitus; et contra.—Quod sit filius sine principio; et contra.—Quod nihil fiat casu; et contra.—Quod peccata etiam placeant Deo; et non.—Quod omnia possit Deus; et non.—Quod creatura sit adoranda; et non.—Quod nullâ de causâ mentiri liceat; et contra," &c. &c.

On the manner in which the task of arraying scriptural against scriptural, patristic against patristic, authority, is thus accomplished, I offer no remark, except that the writer has evidently no scruple in asserting on any grounds, however slight, the actual existence of such a conflict. M. Cousin observes that, under the incumbrance of quotations and precautions, both the thoughts and the style of Abélard falter; but adds that, as he emerges from these defiles, and approaches the end of his work, he resumes his force and freedom, until at length he loudly proclaims his cardinal principle, that doubt is the true key to wisdom—"Dubitando enim ad inquisitionem venimus, inquirendo veritatem percipimus."

Notwithstanding the almost irresistible weight of M. Cousin's judgment, I confess myself (as, indeed, I have already said) to be unconvinced of the sincerity of Abélard's loud avowals of an implicit faith in the Scriptures. If we look rather to the evident tendency, than to the categorical expressions, of his book, it seems to me nothing else than an anticipation of the style in which many French, and not a few English, writers have conducted, and are still conducting, their assaults on Christianity. No one can have much acquaintance with the literature of either country, who is ignorant that it is amongst the common artifices of the more recent enemies

of our faith to assert their implicit acceptance of its credentials—to undertake an orthodox interpretation of many passages of its sacred canon—and even to set themselves to refute objections to its truth—taking good care, however, in their assumed office of Christian advocates, to throw into their statement of those objections the accumulated weight of their learning, and the whole force of their reasoning powers.

To the "Dubitando ad inquisitionem, inquirendo veritatem" of Abélard, a voice of incomparably greater force and eloquence even than his answered from the eastern frontiers of France in apostolic language:—"Animalis Homo non percipit ea quæ sunt Spiritûs Dei. Stultitia enim est ei; et non potest intelligere, *quia spiritualiter examinatur.*" It was the voice of Bernard of Clairvaux, perhaps the noblest, and certainly the most persuasive, of all those imperial spirits who have successively conbuted to mould the intellectual and moral character of his and their native country.

In the year 1100, Robert, a monk of the order of St. Benedict, established a religious brotherhood at Citeaux, which was at that time a waste or forest on the confines of Champagne and Burgundy. Under his directions, an oratory, with a group of surrounding cottages, were erected there for that branch of the great Benedictine family, which afterwards derived from the place the distinctive designation of Cistercian. Within ten years, Robert had been succeeded in the government of the monastery by St. Stephen Harding, an Englishman, under whose guidance the monks, as we are assured by their annalist, laboured with the most austere self-discipline to regain the sacred image in which our race was originally created.

They found it, indeed, a rugged path ; for while their brethren of the princely house of Cluny denounced their ascetic practices as schismatical innovations, disease was hurrying one after another of the new fraternity to premature graves.

Much perplexed to discover why it pleased the Supreme Disposer of events so to afflict the most devoted of his worshippers, St. Stephen (so runs the accepted legend), as he stood by the couch of one of his dying followers, commanded him, in the name of holy obedience, to return, after his death, to Citeaux, with such intelligence as he might be able to obtain in the world of departed spirits, as to the Divine pleasure regarding the Cistercians, and as to the light in which it behoved them to consider their own scheme and manner of life. The monk died, and, I need scarcely add, revisited the abbey, bringing with him the welcome intelligence, that the conventual habits in use there were most acceptable to the Supreme Judge, and authorised to assure them that, ere long, they should see their oratory thronged with new brethren, of whom many should be great, many rich, and many noble, but who, after a temporary abode at Citeaux, should, like so many swarms of bees quitting their native hive, be dispersed on every side, receiving and imparting benedictions. Falling on their knees, the few survivors of the Cistercian brotherhood implored the fulfilment of this gracious promise; and, while the prayer was yet on their lips, a procession was seen to advance slowly through the forest to the gates of the monastery. It was preceded by Bernard, then a youth in his twenty-first year, whose commanding form and expressive countenance enhanced the admiration due to his free and graceful bearing. Casting themselves

at the feet of St. Stephen, Bernard and his companions demanded and obtained permission to perform their noviciate at Citeaux; and then the joyful and now united companies joined in the sacred strain, "Rejoice thou barren that bearest not; break forth and sing thou that travailest not; for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband."

Unless we refuse to listen at all to monastic stories, we must be content to receive them in the monastic style, and with the usual monkish embellishments. But the circumstances which had moved Bernard to migrate to Citeaux, though scarcely less marvellous than these, are far more authentic.

Elizabeth, the daughter of the Count of Montbar, bore to her husband Tecelin, the Lord of Fontaines, six sons, of whom Bernard was the third, and one daughter, to whom her parents gave the name of Humbeline. Tecelin was a great captain, and while he took the field at the head of his vassals, Elizabeth instilled into the minds of her children those sacred lessons which maternal love most effectually teaches. One after another of her sons, however, in due time, followed their father to the wars, Bernard alone being left to listen to the instructions of his mother. They sank so deeply into his heart, that the kindly discipline of his childhood ripened into the philosophy of his declining years; into that philosophy which discovers, in the exercise of love, the foundation of all our knowledge, either of divine or of human things.

From the heavenward aspirations to which he was thus trained from infancy, Bernard derived that fascinating eloquence which bound, as with an irresistible spell, every one with whom he was brought into communication. To such a mind as his, animated

by such filial remembrances, it was natural, and perhaps easy, in the very morning of life, to prefer to all which this world has to promise, the cell and the austerities of an anchorite. Such seeming prodigies admit a very simple and familiar explanation. But to persuade all the members of his family to assume the same indissoluble fetters, required a power of persuasion, in which he probably never found a successful imitator, except, indeed, in the person of Angélique Arnauld, the illustrious abbess of Port Royal des Champs. In obedience to his voice, first Gauldry, Count de Touillon, his uncle, a renowned soldier, exchanged his coat of mail for the monastic habit. Then Barthelemy, his brother, resigned, at his invitation, the service of the Duke of Burgundy for the life-long obscurity and privations of a convent. Andrew, another of his brothers, while listening to his words, had his eyes opened to see their mother smiling upon them from her abode in Paradise, and laying down his sword, he consecrated the remainder of his days to prayer and meditation. Guido, who was the eldest son of their parents, and the heir to the estates and honours of their house, rendered a still more impressive homage to the eloquence of his brother. Surrendering all his wealth and prospects, he even divorced himself from the wife of his youth, and joined the little band which acknowledged Bernard as their spiritual conductor. Gerard, the second of the sons of Tecelin and Elizabeth, strove, but strove in vain, to resist the universal fascination. And when this last victory had been won, Bernard, attended by Barthelemy, by Andrew, by Guido, and by Gerard, knelt before Tecelin to obtain his last blessing ere the separation should be completed, which was to leave the widowed father with no child

to sustain the infirmities of his age, except his daughter Humbeline, and Nivard his youngest son.

The agony of that parting had just been endured, when, as the five young men were for the last time quitting their parental roof, Nivard met them, and immediately joining his brethren, followed the steps of Bernard to the desert. Of thirty persons who accompanied him to Citeaux, six were thus members of his own family — his uncle and his brothers. Not long after, Humbeline also appeared at the gates of the abbey. She sought, it is said, to win back Bernard to the world which worshipped her, and which she at that time worshipped. The words interchanged between them were few, but those few words riveted on her inmost soul such convictions of the vanity of life, as made her fly from it to the severe, but, as she now judged, the salutary and peaceful solitude of the cloister. Deserted by all his children, Tecelin himself at last sought, and, let us hope, did not seek in vain, for consolation, by submitting himself as a simple monk to the spiritual government of his own child, Bernard, then the Abbot of Clairvaux.

Clairvaux, a fair valley, as the word implies, lies between the slopes of two opposite ranges of hills, at the distance of about twelve miles from the city of Bar-sur-Aube. One of the promised swarms of conventual bees had migrated thither from Citeaux, under the guidance of Bernard, and there he passed the whole of his earthly pilgrimage, unless when either the extremity of disease, or his zeal for the interests of the Church, occasionally drew him to a distance. Except by such maladies and such journeys, the monotony of his monastic life was unbroken, and no skill in narrative could render the detail of it either interesting, or really intelligible. It is almost super-

fluous to say, that strains of unearthly music, audible to no ears but his, would sometimes rise and die away along the walls of his monastery,—that celestial visitants descended into his cell,—that Benedict himself came from the abodes of the blessed to hold communion with his illustrious disciple,—and that she who was blessed above women, the very goddess of the place, not seldom presented herself there, to the adoring eyes of her enraptured worshipper. Neither was there any lack of miracle. Paralysis and epilepsy disappeared at the bidding of the saint; and, stranger still, by exclaiming *excommunico eas*, he caused the instant death of so vast a multitude of flies, who were interrupting the dedication of the church of Foigny, that, says the chronicler, the attendants carried them out by shovelsful.

This biography of the cloister is at once so monotonous, and in effect at least, if not in design, so profane, that it may well excite our wonder that so many good men should have repeated, and that so many sane men should have believed it. But not even the coarse handling of those who have undertaken to write the life of Bernard can reduce him to the level of a vulgar hero of ecclesiastical romance. In the history of mankind there is no passage better attested, and none more worthy of diligent meditation, than that which exhibits him as exercising, over the men of his own and of future times, a moral dominion, more enduring and more extensive than that of the greatest ecclesiastical or secular potentate—a dominion acquired by his own regenerate soul and magnificent understanding, without the aid of any temporal advantages, or of any external power; except, indeed, that power which he drew from his unceasing communion with the eternal fountain of holiness and of light.

To us of this generation it may appear inexplicable, how the ruler of a convent, erected by himself, in a wilderness remote from cities, and seldom visited by even a solitary traveller, should attain to such authority, not only amongst his own nation, but throughout Europe at large. But, in the days of Bernard, while all other powers were separated from each other by wars, or ignorance, or by the dissolution of ancient kingdoms into petty fiefs, the clerical order was bound together by a closer and a firmer chain of mutual dependencies, and a more regular subordination, than at any preceding or subsequent period. Not only had the victories of Hildebrand and his immediate successors attached the whole ecclesiastical hierarchy, with increased firmness, to Rome; but the Benedictine order, as yet unrivalled by any new monastic institutes, formed a vast corporation, the affiliated societies of which, in every state and province, and almost in every canton of the Christian world, lived in constant intercourse with each other, and with their common head. In that age, intelligence was diffused, opinion directed, and fame bestowed, partly by those Benedictine convents, and partly by the great schools of France and Italy. The accession of Bernard to their order, followed, as it was, by the conquest of all his kindred, was an event well calculated to arrest the attention, and to excite the curiosity, of the dispensers of reputation in those times: nor was he really concealed at Clairvaux from the personal notice of some of the most eminent of their number.

William of Champeaux, the teacher of Abélard, had by this time become bishop of Chalons; and, in the vacancy of the diocese of Langres, had officiated at the consecration of the monastery of Clairvaux. He found in the abbot a realist quite as zealous as him-

self, but incomparably his superior in range of thought and energy of speech; and when the bishop directed Bernard to preach in all the churches of the see of Chalons, the concourse, the delight, and the conversions of his hearers were such as to announce the appearance of another Chrysostom.

Seven hundred years had then rolled away since the Church had been admonished, or comforted, by the voice of any of her Fathers. They had disappeared; those venerable men who, amidst the decay of all secular learning, had so long maintained the empire, not of religion alone, but of eloquence also; of literature, of philosophy, and of criticism. As age after age passed on, the Church, no longer accustomed to listen to that profound discourse, and to those heart-searching exhortations, had ceased to anticipate the revival of them. To the men of the 12th century, the language of Bernard, at once so vehement and so pathetic, came, therefore, not only with all the power of truth, but with all the force of novelty. It seemed to them as if Augustine had once more risen up to resume his ancient and undisputed sovereignty. They regarded their new apostle as one to whom such abundant disclosures had been made by the Father of lights, as rendered himself a kind of living revelation. They venerated him as a saint, whose mental vision, unclouded by the dark veil of sense, ranged over all the awful realities of our present and our future existence. They believed that the faith by which he had overcome the world, as the foe of his own mental purity, was of power to overcome it, also, as the inveterate nemey of the everlasting Gospel. And bowing down (as our race will ever bow down) before a mind which, in an absolute servitude to the Divine will has regained and rejoices in its own native freedom, they exalted

him to a moral dominion which, at the culminating point of his own greatness, either Julius or Charlemagne might have contemplated with envy.

It was for these reasons, or for reasons such as these, that the Christian world referred to the arbitrament of Bernard the rival pretensions of Innocent II. and of Anaclet II., each of whom was claiming the apostolic throne on the death of Honorius, in 1130. Anaclet retained possession of Rome, and of the other chief Italian cities. He had secured the support of Roger, the Norman duke of Sicily, by the double promise of exchanging his ducal coronet for a royal crown and of bestowing on him the dignity of Patrician of Rome. In northern Italy, and especially in Milan, Conrad, of the House of Hohenstauffen, a pretender to the empire, had numerous and active partisans, who accepted or courted the alliance of Anaclet; and the ever ready sympathy of the powerful Duke and cities of Aquitaine, with the free Italian republics, extended the interest of Anaclet throughout the whole of the south of France.

It was in the north of that country that Innocent sought for spiritual subjects and for defenders. But Louis le Gros would neither take up arms in his support, nor undertake to determine whether he was, indeed, the lawful successor of St. Peter. For the decision of that arduous question, he summoned a national synod to assemble at Etampes, and himself met there in person the northern bishops, and all the greater abbots of the north. There, also, by the express command or invitation of the king, appeared the Abbot of Clairvaux. To him the assembly, with one voice, referred the preliminary investigation of this great controversy, as, with one voice, they afterwards assented to his judgment, that Innocent was

the true pope, and the lawful head upon earth of the Church of Christ. Louis, acquiescing in this sentence, immediately placed his kingdom under the obedience of Innocent; and Bernard became the patron of his cause in all the other states of Europe.

He enforced it successfully on the kings of England, Scotland, Arragon, and Jerusalem, in letters conceived (to judge of them collectively from a single specimen) in a tone as authoritative as had ever been assumed at the palace of the Lateran. To Lothaire, the German emperor elect, Bernard addressed himself in person in Liege. But Lothaire refused to hear the voice of the charmer, charmed he never so wisely, unless the pope would reward his adhesion by renouncing the long disputed papal title to investiture, —and, to such a sacrifice, all the confederate powers of earth and hell could not have tempted or terrified the inexorable abbot. Yet defeat did not seem to be among the possibilities of his existence. Intelligence of the union between the partisans of Conrad and the followers of Anaclet arrived in time to induce Lothaire to waive this claim, and to join with Innocent in a common hostility against their common enemies.

In William, Duke of Aquitaine, Bernard next encountered a still more refractory antagonist than Lothaire. The chroniclers of the age employ their darkest colours in their portrait of the duke. The least of the vices of which they accuse him is the habit of eating habitually, for his own share, as much as would have kept eight stout yeomen in health. His pastimes were still more offensive; for, if we will believe his accusers, he was accustomed to compel his vassals to fight like gladiators for his amusement. This Gargantua had however, it seems, a heart in

his bosom, which once and again melted under the burning eloquence of Bernard, but which, as often, resumed its cold rigidity when that genial influence was withdrawn. At length (so runs the legend) the saint having pronounced the awful words of consecration in a church in which William was worshipping, descended the steps of the altar, his whole countenance glowing as with a radiant flame, and his uplifted hand sustaining the sacred elements as approaching the obdurate duke, he thus addressed him, "Long have I entreated, and thou hast set at nought my entreaties. Many of the servants of God have joined their prayers to mine, and thou hast despised their prayers. Behold, now, the very Son of the Virgin—him whom thou persecutest—the supreme head and lord of the Church—the judge at whose name every knee in earth, in heaven, and in hell must bow! The soul which now animates thee awaits the sentence of that great judge, the avenger of guilt. Wilt thou despise him also, and scorn the master as thou hast scorned his servants?"

Falling on his face (proceeds the chronicle), as he listened to this fearful apostrophe, the duke uttered appalling cries of agony, and, on regaining his self-command, not only tendered his homage to Innocent, but divesting himself of all his dominions, honours, and estates in favour of his daughter Eleonora, the destined wife of Louis VII., abandoned the world itself, and in his thirty-eighth year retired to some place of religious seclusion, where history loses all further trace of him.

I do not pause to winnow the truth from the monkish ornaments which disfigure this narrative. It best illustrates as it stands, if not the actual occurrences of the times, yet at least the estimation

in which Bernard was held by his contemporaries. We know from the incomparably more authentic information of his own letters, how they received and seconded his labours in the same cause, both in the German and the Italian courts.

From them we learn that, under his influence, and by his persuasion, peace was established between Pisa and Genoa, and their respective allies in Lombardy; a peace which not only brought to an end a long and cruel war, but which opened a passage into Italy to Lothaire, who, with Innocent in his camp, was advancing to the mountains. When he crossed them, no enemy remained to the north of the Apennines to oppose his progress, for Conrad of Hohenstauffen and his Milanese supporters were no longer able to derive either aid or shelter from the belligerents who had sheathed their swords at the voice of Bernard. Lothaire, therefore, advanced to Rome with Innocent, and there received from his hands the papal unction and the imperial crown. He did not, however, dispossess Anaclet, either of the church of St. Peter, or of the castle of St. Angelo, but, returning to Germany, left the rival popes to contend with each other by spiritual weapons.

Of such arms Bernard was an absolute master; and, at a council holden at Pisa, he successfully employed in the service, and as the representative of Innocent, all the eloquence for which he was renowned, and all the authority which he had acquired by the pacification of Lombardy. The synod, at his instance, solemnly excommunicated Anaclet and his supporters.

Anselm, the archbishop of Milan, was one of the most considerable of that number; and to Milan,

therefore, Bernard proceeded to enforce the sentence against him. All the resources of hyperbole are exhausted by the chroniclers in their attempt to describe and celebrate his reception in the city of Ambrose. As in the case of that illustrious father, the magistrates and clergy, followed by a countless multitude of the citizens, thronged the approaches to his residence, resolved to place him by force, if necessary, on the archiepiscopal throne. Never was such advancement more ingeniously avoided. The enthusiastic crowd was quieted and dispersed by his assurance that, on the morrow, he would mount his horse, and that if the animal should remain within the city walls, he would accept the proffered mitre, but if it should pass them, he should regard himself as free from any such obligation. The returning day found the saint in the saddle, and galloping with his utmost speed through the gates of Milan. A gleam of merriment, perhaps, for once lighted up those contemplative features; and, ere long, his horse had added to this good service, by carrying him from the tumults of Italy to the tranquillity of Clairvaux.

His repose, however, was but brief. Returning to Germany, he induced Lothaire to pass the Alps again at the head of a force destined for the conquest of Sicily, and for the overthrow of Anaclet. As the emperor drew near to Rome, the indefatigable Bernard appeared once more to guide and to encourage him. But the expedition was not successful. The Sicilian duke, indeed, sustained a defeat near Salerno, but not long after Lothaire himself died. In the succeeding year he was followed to the grave by Anaclet, by whose cardinals, however, was chosen another pope, who assumed the name of Victor. But with the pretensions, Victor did not inherit the perseverance,

of his predecessor. He thought the contest either hopeless or sinful, or both, and presenting himself to Bernard, he placed in his hands the abdication of his title to the Papacy. The schism thus reached its close, and, at the end of anxieties and labours which had been protracted through seven successive years, the abbot returned to his monastery with no worldly or ecclesiastical wealth or dignities; but yet in the consciousness of having rendered to mankind a service which both he and they regarded as inestimable, and which they repaid by such veneration, and by so cordial an applause, as had never greeted the most triumphant of military conquerors.

The repose thus laboriously purchased was, however, to be short-lived. Innocent did not long survive his rival Anaclet, and before March, 1145, three popes had in succession filled the papal throne. It was then transferred, by the unanimous voices of the College of Cardinals, to Bernard of Pisa, a disciple of Bernard of Clairvaux, once a brother of that monastery, where he had been so lightly esteemed, that his appointed office had been to light and feed the fires at which the other monks were to warm themselves when chilled by their nocturnal devotions. But, on his election, he assumed the name of Eugenius, and quickly proved that the mantle of Urban II. had descended upon him.

Intelligence of the capture of Edessa by the Moslem had reached and alarmed Europe almost at the moment of the election of Eugenius. Bernard called upon the pope to unsheathe each of the two swords of Peter. Eugenius accordingly invoked the aid of the then eldest son of the Church, Louis le Jeune. To him the appeal was happily timed and welcome. The destruction of many of his own subjects in

an attack on the city of Vitry, hung heavily on his conscience; and the crime, as he judged, could not be so effectually expiated as by the slaughter of a hundred-fold the same number of Saracens at Edessa. Thus both the spiritual and the temporal sovereigns of Bernard joined in addressing to him a commission, or rather a command, to preach a new crusade to the faithful in France and Germany.

Though his body was worn by fatigue, wasted by sickness, and emaciated by fasts and self-discipline, the soul of Bernard rose and expanded itself to the height of this sacred summons. In Easter of the year 1146, his attenuated figure, but still beaming eye, were conspicuous in the front of a lofty stage, erected on the slope of one of those hills which environ the town and plain of Vezelay. There sat the King and his Queen Eleonora, and by them stood the great vassals, and prelates, and barons of his realm, with a throng of inferior knights and seigneurs; while, in the front of this royal assemblage, was gathered a mighty host crowding the hill sides and the plain below, and all awaiting in breathless silence the voice of the renowned orator who stood before them.

There is, I believe, no extant record of his speech, though never before or since was eloquence rewarded by so signal a triumph. He appears to have given a rhetorical impersonation to the Holy City, and in her name to have been calling on his hearers to rescue her from the grasp of the followers of the False Prophet, when he was interrupted by a shout arising simultaneously from all the countless ranks of that agitated multitude, thousands and tens of thousands of voices raising, repeating, and again and again re-echoing the exclamation, "It is the will of God!"

A single soul seemed to have possessed the whole of that innumerable company. Casting himself at the feet of the speaker, the king first received from his hands the cross, which irrevocably bound him who bore it to engage in person in that perilous adventure. Beside her lord, and devoted to the same high enterprise, knelt Eleonora. The princes, bishops, barons, knights, and seigneurs followed her example, and then the commons, wave after wave pressing forward, in interminable succession, to the immediate presence of Bernard, continued till nightfall and through the whole of the succeeding day, to besiege him with importunate demands for crosses, until, after exhausting every other resource, he had torn his own Benedictine habit into shreds, to serve as badges for this noble army of martyrs.

The great master of the spell, himself inflamed by the enthusiasm which he thus excited, hurrying from province to province, and from city to city, every where demanded new champions of the Holy Sepulchre. At Chartres, another mighty congregation listened and obeyed, but not without a response, which, little as it was either foreseen or welcomed by Bernard, seems not to have been altogether unreasonable. They demanded that, exchanging his cowl and tunic for a coat of mail, he should, in his own person, conduct them to the warfare against the infidel. He still retained, however, too much sobriety for this. Perhaps he had already awakened to the truth that, among his half-maddened associates, there were not a few with whom it would ill-suit him to contract so intimate a personal alliance.

Of that number was Rodolph, a German monk, who had taken on himself the task of arousing the zeal of his fellow-countrymen. But Rodolph was one of

those men who, when they have once yoked themselves to any principle, are dragged helplessly along by it into the most extravagant of its seeming consequences. It was meritorious to slay the enemies of the Cross in Palestine; could it then be right, or allowable, to spare them in Germany? Finding the question unanswerable, Rodolph, from the sources to the mouths of the Rhine, brought his hearers to prepare themselves for the destruction of the Saracens by the massacre of the Jews.

I doubt whether the title of any of the Saints whom the Church of Rome has raised to her honours of canonisation, would be justified by any proofs of his having cultivated the virtue of toleration, excepting only in the single case of Bernard of Clairvaux. It was with a noble inconsistency that he dissented from the inexorable logic of Rodolph. For, while himself sounding the trumpet which marshalled the Christian nations of Europe to the slaughter of the unbelieving inhabitants of Asia, he addressed to the German people an encyclical epistle, commending the hereditary enemies of the Gospel to their kindness and forbearance, in terms as eloquent as could have been dictated by Jeremy Taylor, and as wise as could have been suggested by John Locke, if those apostles of toleration had then been living.

Nor was it by his letters only that Bernard taught the Germans to be at once thus merciful and merciless. During many weeks or months he traversed their land in person, attended by some of the monks of his order, who have left us a daily journal of that miraculous peregrination; for every step was a miracle. So numerous and so stupendous were the prodigies which he wrought in stimulating his proselytes to march to the holy war, that death and disease may be said to

have retired, like vanquished foes, at his presence. The authors of these narratives, however, select, as the miracle of miracles, the conversion of the Emperor Conrad III., and his assumption of the Cross. It may seem presumptuous to dispute their judgment on such a question; but, to myself, the most prodigious of all the prodigies they record, and certainly the best attested, appears to be the fact, that though he was totally ignorant of German, and always preached in French, yet such was the magic of Bernard's discourses, even when utterly incomprehensible, that, from Constance to Cologne, the Teutonic gravity was every where rapt at his bidding into an immutable resolution to march from the banks of the Rhine to those of the Jordan. I have no doubt of the general good faith with which all these marvels are told; and these Itinera Germanica seem to me not destitute of a real and appropriate value. They curiously illustrate the strange extent to which vast masses of men, under the sympathetic influence of any profound emotion, may become utterly incapable of the natural use, not only of their reasonable understandings, but even of their bodily senses.

Leaving his German proselytes to prepare for their long pilgrimage to the East, Bernard returned to France, to expedite the departure of that mighty armament, and then retired to the devout and placid solitude of Clairvaux. There, in due time, he learnt that the war which he had so exultingly provoked, had swept away at least two hundred thousand of his fellow countrymen and fellow Christians; the helpless victims of woes as fearful as they were profitless and inglorious. There is still living, in the person of the Abbé de Ratisbonne, his latest biographer, at least one devout and zealous apologist of the

author of this lamentable carnage; and from the Abbé we may learn, that, in the retrospect of this great catastrophe, Bernard found nothing to disturb the tranquillity of his cell and of his conscience. Adopting what seems to me at once the more probable and the more charitable opinion, I rather conclude that the review of the calamities which his ill-directed zeal had brought on his country and on mankind, was the immediate cause which brought his life to an unexpected, though not an early close, not long after the return of Louis with the four fragments of the noblest army which had ever followed the Oriflamme of St. Denys, under the guidance of a king of France.

The preceding account of the mighty influence exercised by Bernard over some of the great movements of his age, will not have been misplaced, if (as I trust) it shall contribute to render intelligible to you the still more powerful control which he exercised over its opinions. To estimate aright the extent of that authority, it would indeed be requisite to refer to the collection of his letters, almost all of which relate to the questions, political or religious, by which his generation was chiefly agitated. They show that he was employed day by day, continually, in adjusting the disputes of princes, in considering the complaints of their subjects, in redressing the grievances of the oppressed, in arbitrating between litigants, in founding monasteries and bishoprics, in providing for the wants of all the churches; and, above all, in the decision of controverted points of doctrine. "Aiunt non vos esse Papam" (he says to Pope Eugenius) "sed me, et undique ad me confluunt qui habent negotia." And in this character of a substituted or auxiliary pontiff, elected by general acclamation, we find him ruling the deliberations and

guiding the decisions of almost every ecclesiastical synod of his times; but of none with results more remarkable than those which followed the acts of the council holden in the year 1121, in the city and church of Sens.

Rallying his strength and spirits after the great calamity of his life, Abélard had resumed his chair in the University of Paris, or rather amidst the students whom his reputation still drew round him, on the mount and in the gardens sacred to Ste. Geneviève, the patroness of that city. His speculations on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity had been communicated, not merely to his pupils, but to the world at large, in a book which awakened the alarms and stimulated the zeal of the orthodox Abbot of Clairvaux. If Bernard be accurate, it reproduced and combined the heresies of Arius, of Pelagius, and of Nestorius. But he was too good and wise a man to make any public assault upon the writer of it, until he had first endeavoured, by a private and friendly remonstrance, to convince him of his errors, and to induce him to retract them. The vulgar arts of vulgar controversialists were beneath the genius, and alien from the spirit, of St. Bernard; and winning by his kindness an opponent, whom he might probably have exasperated by less gentle methods, he induced Abélard at least to promise a retractation. The promise, however, was not fulfilled. On the contrary, Abélard, reverting to his former habits of thought, published other books of the same general tendency, and among them the treatise called "Sic et Non," to which I have already adverted.

Bernard then broke silence, and, in a letter to Pope Innocent II., he denounced, not merely the doctrines of Abélard, but the whole scheme and system of in-

vestigation, which had conducted him to them, invoking the authority of the Pope to suppress so great a scandal. Abélard answered by equally loud protestations of his innocence and orthodoxy, and appealed to a council then about to be holden in the city of Sens.

Never had tidings of an approaching tournament excited more universal interest in France, than was kindled by the intelligence of the passage at arms, which was accordingly appointed to take place between the two great doctors and rhetoricians of that age. Bernard, however, was at first reluctant to engage in the contemplated debate. He answered the summons of the Archbishop of Sens in the words of David: "I am but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." But he was not permitted so to withdraw from the conflict with the Goliath of Rationalism. It was, he says, with tears in his eyes, that he at length consented to meet this terrible adversary; but it was with faith and hope in his heart. He strengthened himself by revolving the words of Christ, "Take no thought how, or what, ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak." And again borrowing the language of David, he comforted himself by the words, "The Lord is my strength, I will not fear what man can do unto me." The event showed that any other preparations for this dreaded encounter would have been superfluous.

In the great church of Sens appeared all the Fathers of the council, and there also appeared Louis VII. himself, with the chief dignitaries of his realm, ecclesiastical and secular, all animated with the same curiosity to listen to the anticipated debate between the two master spirits of the age.

It was opened by Bernard. He produced the writings of Abélard, enumerated his imputed errors, and demanded that he should either vindicate or retract them. Expectation was raised to the highest pitch, when, to the surprise and disappointment of the whole assembly, the eloquent Abélard remained inflexibly silent. He was either unable, or unwilling, to utter a single word in his own defence, and at length precipitately quitted the synod, after interposing an appeal to the Pope against their decision. They rejected his appeal, and unanimously condemned his doctrines as heretical. Once again the now victorious Bernard borrowed from David the language in which to express the feelings with which he contemplated the triumphant result of this much dreaded controversy. "I myself," he exclaimed, "have seen the ungodly in great power, and flourishing like the green bay-tree. I went by, and, lo! he he was gone; I sought him, and his place was nowhere to be found." The proceedings of the Council of Sens were then transmitted to Rome, and the Pope, confirming their decision, sentenced Abélard to an eternal silence.

The defeated philosopher did not prolong the struggle. His spirit seems to have been broken by affliction, and his body worn by labour and excitement. He sought for tranquillity by publishing what has been usually called his retractation, though it would perhaps, with greater reason, be called his apology for his writings. But neither Bernard, nor any of the theologians of the times, pressed hardly on their fallen foe. He was a Sampson Agonistes, terrible even in defeat, and his conquerors wisely acquiesced in his retractation, such as it was, and sought by kindness to restore him to the bosom of

the Church. Within two years from the close of this dispute he was summoned from the world in which he had accumulated so much knowledge, but had attained to so little happiness. Before his death, the friendship which had once subsisted between Bernard and himself was re-established. Nor can we doubt that, in the contemplation of that great event, both the Realist and the Nominalist derived comfort from the belief that, in passing from the world of shadows into the regions of light, they should both find a far more perfect solution of those deep mysteries than they had been able to attain, either in the cloisters of Clairvaux, or in the schools of Paris.

"To speak it plainly," says M. Guizot, "Protestantism is nothing else than the insurrection of the human mind against the spiritual despotism of the sacerdotal order." To the reclamations of such insurgents in the 12th century, the Church of Rome opposed not merely the sacred text as interpreted by primæval and unbroken traditions, but also another authority, less liable than these to be perverted or misunderstood, yet (as she maintained) of an origin not less divine. The Deity himself (said the realist and orthodox doctors of that age) has engraven on the souls of all the children of Adam many legible and most significant characters. These inscriptions, though coeval in each man with his birth, may be obscured by carnality or worldliness, as on the other hand they may be rendered more luminous and intelligible by self-discipline, and by habits of devotion and of virtue. But whether darkened or illuminated, they must still remain indelible in every human bosom, at once bearing witness to the truths which it is the office of the Church to perpetuate, and rendering the acceptance of them not so much a duty, as a law and

a necessity of our moral nature—a necessity which ceases, indeed, then, but only then, when the soul to which such truths are proclaimed, being blinded by its own pollutions, is effectually deprived of its spiritual discernment.

Such I believe to be an accurate summary of the doctrine of St. Bernard on this subject. But I would rather present it to you in his own words:—"There is," he says, "nothing in the Divine intellect which is not eternal and immutable. Thus, those *principia rerum*, which Plato calls ideas, are not mere mental images. Possessing the attributes of eternity and immutability, they must be realities; nor does any thing exist, whatever may be the mode of its existence, except by an union to them."—

"A spirit, whose origin and abode is celestial, has ever before her eyes the mirror in which she contemplates all things. She beholds the Divine Logos; and *in* the Logos the whole of the creation which the Logos has called into existence. So that she does not draw her knowledge of the Creator from the creation; nor, when she would attain to the knowledge of created things, is it necessary for her to descend among them; for she beholds them all in a position where they exist, in a manner more excellent than any in which they do or can exist in themselves."—

"The mysteries of our faith do not depend on human reason, but rest on the immutable foundations of truth. What! ask me to doubt of that which of all things is the most absolutely true? Faith is not an opinion formed in us by our laborious studies. It is an interior conviction, to which conscience bears its testimony. It is the basis of our reasonings, not their conclusion. It is no inference from our investigations, but is itself an absolute certainty."

If to this teaching of St. Bernard any one had answered—that the innate ideas, which reflect in the human soul, as in a mirror, the eternal and immutable realities of the Divine intellect, (and especially such of those ideas as relate to our faith as Christians,) are after all but so many individual revelations, which can be seen only by each man for himself, and which none can exhibit to his neighbour—his answer, as I infer from his habitual tone of thought, would have been, that the substantial coincidence or identity of such ideas in all regenerate men, is not without a clear and a conclusive attestation. He would have found such an attestation in that unity of sentiment and of belief, by which (as he insisted), the several members of the Catholic Church are held together, as one living body, animated by one all informing soul—a union, the sacred harmony of which results from the concord of the innumerable strings vibrating in the spirits of each and of all of those whom it embraces.

I am very conscious that my feet are but too liable to stumble on such mountain-tops as I am treading, and that their atmosphere is too fine for my respiration. Nevertheless, I must request you to accompany me a few steps further on these giddy heights.

I have already said that Bernard was prepared by maternal tenderness for that philosophy—the philosophy of Love—which he adopted in his more mature years. To make that general statement intelligible, I must touch, though most briefly, on topics the sanctity of which I might but too probably violate if I presumed to dwell on them at any greater length. I would observe, then, that he found a Summa Theologiæ in the sublime declaration, that "the pure in heart shall see God." He judged that,

when so admitted to the sight of Him who is at once Light and Love, the pure in heart would derive from that beatific vision such an insight into all truth, and so ardent a thirst for perfect conformity to the Divine image, that casting aside, while still denizens of earth, the crutches of human investigation, and the thraldom of human passions, they would soar, as on the wings of eagles, into those celestial regions, where knowledge is intuitive, and love and wisdom are the very elements of life. Kindling with some such conceptions as these, St. Bernard, selected the Book of Canticles as the theme of his most celebrated, though (I suppose) his least intelligible, work.

To us who know man only in his social state, and have no personal experience of him in his cloistered condition, the visions which peopled the brain of the great St. Bernard may perhaps appear but as so many phantasms; or as air-bubbles, reflecting gorgeous colours for the amusement of the child who has inflated them. I will not undertake to assert their substantial value, but I am well convinced that even the day-dreams of such a man are entitled to our reverence and tenderness, and that some knowledge of them is essential to a correct understanding of the growth and progress of philosophical literature in France.

An anchorite is almost of necessity a mystic, that is, one who habitually infers the objective from the subjective; or, in plainer words, one who assumes the existence of realities without him, corresponding with the most cherished of the visionary thoughts within him. The mind, cut off from the common duties, interests, and affections of life, wedded to an emaciated, and enervated, and therefore irritable body, and continually driven inward for occupation, creates

for itself substitutes for the objects amongst which others live, and readily glides into the belief that its own figments are so many innate ideas — types of actual entities — creatures of a divine original, and of an eternal and immutable existence. To the prisoner of the convent these deliriums may be as innocuous as they are pleasant; to the denizens of the wide world they are neither the one nor the other.

St. Bernard was pre-eminently a mystic, nor does the term convey any reproach. It is, indeed, ascribed to him, and to the other ascetic heroes and heroines of his age, in the most recent panegyrics of the most eloquent and learned of existing Roman Catholic biographers. In what sense that eulogium is bestowed, and is to be understood, may be best explained by referring to the writings in which the most renowned of all his monastic contemporaries has developed the mysteries of those transcendental doctrines — so far, at least, as they can be intelligibly revealed in the language in use among uninspired men.

In the age of Bernard, there was living at the monastery of Boppart, near Bingen, a lady who has since been immortalised, under the name of Sainte Hildegarde. His interpretation of the promise, that "the pure in heart shall see God," is supposed by the hagiologists to have received in her its most complete accomplishment. During his mission to raise champions of the Cross in Germany, he visited her at her convent, and they ever afterwards lived in the habitual interchange of letters with each other. The subjects, and the nature of that correspondence, may be learnt from his published epistles, or from the *acta sanctorum* of the Bollandists, or from any of the many histories of her life which her admirers have given to the world; or, better still, from the books in which

she communicated to others the awful disclosures from on high, which she believed to have been made to herself.

From these sources it is to be collected that, in the third year of her life, Hildegarde first became conscious of a brilliant light, which, being at once material and spiritual, radiated through her body, until it had reached and illuminated her soul. These beams, which, of course, were of heavenly origin, reappeared to her at frequent intervals during the next fourscore years. And surpassingly wonderful was their influence. They imparted to her, as she devoutly believed, a perfect comprehension of all the Holy Scriptures, rendering transparent to her the mysteries which they darkly intimate to others. Discerning, in the mirror of her own mind, many of the eternal and immutable ideas of the Divine intellect, she was enabled to perceive what are the corresponding forms, and what the analogous laws, by which this mundane system is pervaded and governed. The primitive matter of which all things material are composed, was laid bare to her in its elementary state. The soul of man becoming the object of her spiritualised sense, was discovered to be "a celestial harmony." The awful attributes and ineffable nature of the Blessed Virgin became to Hildegarde the subject of immediate consciousness. Ascending to the eternal and perennial fountains of life, she surveyed the operations of the creative energy. Descending to this lower world, she beheld, unrolled before her, the future history, and the ultimate destination, of our race, and especially the reign of Antichrist, and the ultimate triumph of the Church, which is at once Catholic and Roman.

If St. Hildegarde were now living amongst us, who would be so cruel as to disturb, who so idle as to

listen to her hallucinations? But mental nosology was a science neither understood nor studied in the 12th century. At that time, Bernard, the greatest of the canonised doctors whom the Church of Rome can claim as peculiarly her own (for the Fathers of the first five centuries belong to the Church Universal), hailed and revered the revelations of the prophetess as if she had been another Miriam. "They are not," he said, "the work of man, nor will any man be able to understand them, whose soul love has not restored to the Divine image and likeness."—"They who ascribe these visions to demoniacal suggestions, prove that they have no deep acquaintance with heavenly contemplations."

Nor was this the judgment of Bernard alone. During no less than three successive months, the books of Hildegarde engaged the attention of a synod convened by Eugenius at Treves. The Fathers assembled there concurred in the opinions of the Abbot of Clairvaux; and Eugenius, in an autograph letter, exhorted her "diligently to cherish in her heart the grace which God had lavished upon her; but never to divulge, without extreme circumspection, what that Divine grace might prompt her to say." Nor was this all. No less than three other infallible popes, Anastatius IV., Adrian IV., and Alexander III., who succeeded Eugenius on the papal throne, each in his turn gave his sanction to the reveries of St. Hildegarde.

If these legends should appear to you too puerile for any serious notice, or too remote from our present subject to be noticed on this occasion, I answer that the mysticism which they illustrate was really pregnant with the most important results, both speculative and practical. In speculation, it was at

once the fruit and the root of Bernard's doctrine of Realism. In practice, it was the too prolific germ of those relentless persecutions which have left their sanguinary stain upon almost every page of the annals of the Church of Rome.

Assume that the State, as the minister of the Church, has power enough to terrify into silence and submission all dissenters from the established creed, and then three steps only are wanting to perfect the theory of persecution. The first, that the dominant Church is infallibly right; the second, that the imputed error is fatal to the souls of those who hold it; the third, that the heretic dissents not from weakness or error of judgment, but from depravity of will. Now Realism, and Mysticism its offspring, supply each of those steps.

For if, as Bernard taught, faith is the basis, not the conclusion, of our reasonings; and if that basis be itself laid in legible characters, engraven indelibly by the Creator on the souls of his rational creature man, then every one who can read those characters is infallible, so far at least as they accompany and conduct him. And if, on comparing those characters with the imputed heresy, he finds that the collision between the two is direct, and that it takes place in the highest regions of these divinely inspired ideas, then the fatal tendency of it is demonstrated. And, inasmuch as the dissenter can be prevented from discerning in his own mind the same sacred indications of truth only by that blindness which is the result and the punishment of his carnal or worldly pollutions, his dissent is not error, but guilt. The remedy for it is not argument, but the stake. Thus the acceptance by popes and doctors of the incoherent rhapsodies of an illiterate old woman as

evidences of so many innate ideas reflecting the eternal verities of the Divine intellect, closed the door to all reasoning with those who rejected their creed, or any part of it. The believers and the dissenters had no common premises on which to argue. To the imputed heretics, the reflections on the mental mirror of St. Hildegarde were but as so many delirious scrawls on the prison walls of a lunatic. To her patrons they were as authoritative as the handwriting on the palace wall of Belshazzar.

Bernard himself, it is true, though a realist, and therefore a mystic, was not a persecutor. His too successful efforts for the destruction of the followers of the False Prophet, whatever may be the censure due to him on account of them, had nothing in common with the guilt of his brethren of Citeaux, of St. Dominic, and of Innocent III., in their crusade against the Albigenses. Had he lived till then, I fear that his principles must have conducted him to a full participation in those crimes. But he was a wise and a holy man, whose hourly prayer not to be "led into temptation" was not offered in vain.

I cannot claim such an acquaintance with him as he is exhibited in his own books, as to be able to offer any general criticism upon them. But I know enough of them to understand why, in France, the land of eloquence, so high, if not indeed the very highest, place has been assigned to the eloquence of Bernard. The opinion, or, perhaps, I should rather say the conjecture, which I venture to hazard on his writings is, that they are such as could proceed only from a man whose whole existence had become one prolonged alternation of study and of devotion, who never ceased to worship except to write, and never laid down his pen except to pray. Whenever he de-

scends from the mountain to speak to men, the Shekinah is visible on his countenance. It is, I believe, for this reason chiefly, though not exclusively, that every section of the Universal Church has ever rendered him the homage which usually each reserves for its own heroical men, and for them alone. The testimonies of Protestants in his favour might be drawn from all the countless divisions and subdivisions of the Protestant world. It is enough to refer to the two greatest of the leaders of the "insurrection against the spiritual despotism of the sacerdotal order." Luther says of Bernard, that "omnes doctores vincit;" and Calvin, that "ita loquitur ut veritas ipsa loqui videatur."

No similar veneration has ever waited on the name and memory of Abélard. The sentence which has been passed upon him by posterity may have been severe, but it is now irreversible. For some passages of his life no defence is possible, nor shall I make myself the apologist for much of what he has written. But to the charge that he was the founder of the Rationalistic system in modern Europe it may, I think, be well answered, that the reproach is too indefinite to convey any precise meaning, or to admit of any distinct refutation.

A Rationalist is usually censured as one who gratifies the pride of our common nature, by subjecting all doctrines, those of revelation not excepted, to the scrutiny and judgment of his understanding; and by making his own reason the standard of truth, or at least of his own appreciation of truth. That such pride mingles with most of our thoughts, and therefore with the thoughts of those who are usually condemned as Rationalists, no one will probably deny. But the same rebuke may, I think, be addressed with

equal, or perhaps with greater, force to most of their antagonists. The exultation of Bernard and his adherents, for example, in contemplating themselves as so many living depositaries of the reflected ideas of the Creator, was probably more haughty, as it was certainly more unfounded, than the exultation of Abélard and his disciples, in contemplating themselves as the depositaries of a power, by the right use of which divine truth might be interpreted or discovered. There is a pride of belief, as well as a pride of investigation; and I know not which of the two passions is the more unruly.

Neither can I perceive that Abélard erred in thinking, that, by the constitution of our nature, each man's reason is, and must be, to himself the ultimate judge of truth. That such is the province of our reason is, indeed, most impressively, though unconsciously, admitted in every attempt to disprove it. If you encounter such Rationalism as this by argument, you are appealing to the very reason which it is the object of your argument to silence and dethrone. The stake is the only consistent and practicable refutation of the imputed error.

But, on the other hand, that Rationalism which conducted Abélard, as it has conducted so many others, to the conclusion that human reason is not merely the *judge* of truth, but is also the one *guide* to truth, seems to me not only a dangerous, but a fatal, mistake.

His text, as we have seen, was, "Dubitando ad inquisitionem venimus, inquirendo veritatem percipimus." I dissent from each of those positions.

First. "Dubitando ad inquisitionem venimus" is an apophthegm, in deference to which many of the greatest intellects in France, as I shall hereafter have occasion

to show, have brought their minds into what is called "a state of provisional doubt;" and great is the glory which they have won by this achievement. To myself no boast appears more unjust or unmeaning.

Faith, not doubt, is the indispensable condition, and the law, of our existence. Life begins with credulity; and, to the close of life, an implicit trust in the opinions of others is the lot, not merely of the unlearned many, but to a very great extent of the most learned amongst the instructed few. The wisest of the children of men have ever held, and must ever hold, the vast majority of their most important convictions, not on inquiry, but on trust.

The true doctrine I take to be rather, "Credendo ad inquisitionem venimus." You must take a multitude of things for granted, if you would know any thing to the purpose. The child assumes the knowledge and veracity of his parents. The pupil reposes the same credit in his preceptor. The philosopher relies on the reports of the experimentalist, and the statesman on the calculations of the statician. Nay, the Divine teacher of all truth amongst men—He who was Himself the impersonation of wisdom—taught that obedience is the path to knowledge; and that we must do the will of our Maker, in order to know of the doctrine; or, in other words, that we must not provisionally question, but provisionally assume, the authority of our best accessible instructor, in order that we may subsequently verify or correct that assumption by the experience to which it will conduct us.

Neither can I subscribe to the "Inquirendo veritatem percipimus," without large qualifications. Inquiry conducts us, not so much to truth itself, as to the best teachers of truth. Life is not long enough,

the human mind is not capacious enough, to enable any man to build up a complete system of knowledge and belief by his own investigations. The Author of our being has not left his creature man, with his feeble powers and his short span of life, to grope out, by his own isolated studies, those truths which it most concerns him to reach and to hold firmly. It is not by our own researches that we attain to truth in what concerns our health of body, or our individual, or our social, interests. In those matters our inquiries do but conduct us to the best attainable guides, and place us under their direction. The case is not essentially otherwise when we are investigating the great problems of our actual condition in this life, and of our prospects beyond it.

I have thus ventured, and certainly in no forgetfulness of the seeming presumption of the attempt, to indicate what I suppose to be the errors of the realist and mystic Bernard on the one hand, and of the nominalist and rationalistic Abélard on the other. I have done so because, in the metaphysical style of the modern French language, they were the earliest "expressions," in their native country, of the two great antagonistic principles by which, from their days to our own, it has been distracted. These are the principle of faith and the principle of reason. Names and forms have, indeed, passed away. Realism and Nominalism are no longer the inscriptions on the banners of the contending hosts. But that abstruse metaphysical debate, however hidden under new modes of speech, still lies at the root of this immortal controversy. The innate ideas of Des Cartes, the mysterious doctrines of Kant (so far as I have any information respecting them), and Mr. Coleridge's much cherished distinction of the pure

reason and the practical understanding, were but so many republications of the Realism of St. Bernard. At the close of the incomparable essay with which M. Cousin has introduced his publication of the Ouvrages Inédits d'Abélard, (to which I gladly acknowledge myself to be indebted for all that I know on the subject of his doctrines,) occurs a passage which explains, with so much beauty and exactness, the permanent importance of the debate on which I have been dwelling, that I cannot better terminate this lecture than by attempting to lay it before you in our own language, so far at least as it is in my power to find any equivalents in English for his refined, and almost Platonic, phraseology.

"A problem (says M. Cousin) which might seem scarcely worthy to be made the subject even of a philosophical reverie, gave birth to different metaphysical systems. Those systems agitated the schools, and, at first, the schools only. Ere long they passed from the province of metaphysics into that of religion, and from religion they advanced into the region of politics. Then, taking their place on the historical stage, they interposed in the events of the world, agitated councils, and afforded occupation to kings. William the Conqueror is summoned into the field by the English clergy against the nominalist Roscelin; and Louis VII. becomes the president of the synod in which Bernard, the hero of the age, denounces the conceptionist Abélard, himself the teacher of Arnaud of Brescia. All this is, however, but a prelude. Time runs its course. Conceptionism, which, during nearly two centuries, has cherished Nominalism in its bosom, at length sets its charge at liberty; and then this new consequence, or rather this renewed consequence, of the same fundamental principle, finding

the times more favourable, appears with a far different lustre, and excites tempests never experienced till then. Occam (a new Roscelin), by once more applying Nominalism to theology, and so to politics, checks the power of the Pope, engages a king and an emperor in his quarrel, and sheltering himself against the lightnings of Rome under the wings of the imperial eagle, is able to say to the head of the empire, with no unbecoming pride, 'Tu me defende gladio; ego te defendam calamo.' Abandoned by the king of France, but aided by the emperor of Germany, the indomitable Franciscan, escaping from the dungeon of Roger Bacon, dies in exile at Munich. But he has been a teacher at Paris—that prolific soil in which no seeds which have once been committed to it are ever permitted to perish. The University of Paris embraces the proscribed doctrine. Nominalism, triumphant, diffuses the spirit of independence. That new spirit gives birth to the Councils of Constance and of Basle, where appear the great nominalists, Peter d'Ailly and John Gerson—those Fathers of the Gallican Church—those sage Reformers, whose voices are unheeded, and who are, ere long, replaced by *that other nominalist called Luther*. It were well, therefore, not to be so very facetious on the subject of metaphysics; for metaphysics embrace at once the original principles, and the ultimate principles, of all things."

LECTURE XVIII.

ON THE POWER OF THE PEN IN FRANCE.

EMINENT as was the place of Gerbert, of Bernard, and of Abélard, in the literature of France, yet, in their days, French literature was still unborn. Neither the theologians, nor the chroniclers, who plied their pens in the Benedictine monasteries, nor the Troubadours, who practised their gay science in the Provençal courts of love, made use of that language which in our own days is vernacular in their native country. Latin in its various forms, classical, scholastic, colloquial, and rustic, was their only instrument of communication with their own or future ages; and, for this reason, neither the holy unction of the Abbot of Clairvaux, nor the philosophical acumen of his great rival, nor the songs or romances which once charmed the court of Toulouse, ever retained any permanent hold on the hearts, or on the memories, of the men of later times.

The earliest writers to whom that glory belongs are those who, having been present either as actors or as spectators at the great military achievements of their age and nation, recorded them in narratives in which the styles appropriate to chronicle, to history, and to memoirs, are confounded, or rather are harmonised with each other. Of that class of writers, three only retain, and probably they alone deserve, at this day the admiration which greeted them in their own, —I refer to Joinville, to Froissart, and to Philippe de Comines.

It is not the least of the glories of the reign of St. Louis, that it produced the first fruits of that abundant harvest of glory, which was to be gathered in by writers, in his own native tongue, in each generation succeeding to his own. Our acknowledgment of the wealth and abundance of that harvest should be made with no niggard hand, or grudging spirit. For if the extent to which the intellectual labours of any people are diffused and welcomed beyond the limits of their own territory and language, is the best criterion of their excellence (and I know of none less doubtful), we must concede to the great authors of France a pre-eminence above those of any other country in modern Europe. Be that, however, as it may, I at present refer to the influence which they have exercised in the remotest parts of the civilised world, as affording us some indication of the authority which they have possessed at home,—some measure of that domestic power of the pen, on the right use or abuse of which so much of their good or evil fortunes, as a nation, has been dependent. To understand the workings of that power is to understand not merely the great writers of France, but the people, also, for whom they wrote.

In that country, as in every other, the authority of men of letters has always consisted in the exactness with which they have succeeded in reflecting in their books the better and more enduring aspects of the character of their nation. They must be the interpreters of the habitual state of mind of those for whom they write, or they must write in vain. They must give utterance to thoughts, which their less gifted readers would have uttered if they could. They must bring into the light ideas which, when clothed by them in appropriate terms, others will recognise, or will suppose themselves to recognise, as so many conceptions which, in inchoate and immature forms, were already struggling for birth in their own minds. It is by means of such services, and of such illusions as these, that, in each generation, the foremost understandings make willing captives of the multitude, and, if they be true to their high calling, mould them into docile and obedient pupils. The action and reaction of the literature and of the national character of any people upon each other, is the true subject of their moral and intellectual history.

It is especially so with regard to France. No where else have books and men borne so intimate a relation to each other. Whoever has much studied their books must be of a sluggish imagination, if he has not seen the land and its inhabitants with his mental eye, even before he has actually visited them. Not only their dramatists, their novelists, and their memoir-writers, but their divines, philosophers, moralists, and historians, are ever drawing from the life. The Misanthrope, or the Memoirs of St. Simon, are not more absolutely French than the Essays of Montaigne, or the Discourses of Massillon. Sternes la Fleur is not so thoroughly a Frenchman as

Montesquieu. From the literary works, grave and gay, of the French people, which lie in such profusion before us, we may perhaps, therefore, be able to infer something of the spirit of the land for which they were composed, and of the influence of that spirit on the authors of them.

First, then, every one who is at all conversant with the great writers of France will, I believe, be prompt to acknowledge their superiority to all other European writers, and especially to our own, in the art, or the power, of perspicuity. Compare, for example, the language of Montaigne, of Pascal, of Bossuet, or of Montesquieu, with the style of Hooker, or Milton, or Jeremy Taylor, or Clarendon. How limpid the flow, how clear and logical the sequences of the French, — how involved, inverted, parenthetical, and obscure the stately march of the English composition. In the Ecclesiastical Polity, in the Areopagitica, in the Liberty of Prophesying, or in the History of the Rebellion, how few are the periods which fully convey their meaning, until they have been broken up by the student into their elementary sentences. In the Essays of Montaigne, or in the Provincial Letters, or in the Histoire des Variations, or in the Esprit des Lois, how laboriously must the reader search for so much as a single example of involution, inversion, or parenthesis? I express no opinion on the comparative excellence either of the two schools, or of their respective canons of criticism. I confine myself to the remark, that, in this competition of the giants, the palm of habitually expressing the most profound thoughts in the most simple and intelligible forms of speech, must be awarded not to England but to France.

And such as are the giants in either host, such also, in their measure, are the innumerable dwarfs in each.

In later times, indeed, the common herd of writers in both nations have affected a sort of *chiaro-scuro;* the convenient shelter for meagreness of thought and poverty of invention. For this degeneracy we however are, I fear, far more deeply responsible than our neighbours. Darkened as the literary language of France has so often been by the fumes of undigested metaphysics, there is no author, and scarcely any reader there, who would not stand aghast at the introduction into his native tongue of that inorganic language which even Samuel Taylor Coleridge himself tumbled out in some of his more elaborate speculations, and with which the imitators of that great man are at this day distorting and Germanising the speech of our progenitors.

Now, as we are to infer from the style peculiar to France some of the distinguishing characteristics of the national mind, what are those distinctive qualities of the French people which have prescribed clearness and precision as the first and fundamental law of all good or tolerable composition among them? I answer, first, that, in that law, we have a proof of the genial, sympathetic, and communicative spirit which is their inalienable birthright. The cloud-compelling Jupiter shrouded himself in darkness, because he dwelt in an abstracted and silent solitude. But the God of day rejoiced in the light, because he was also the God of eloquence. Even so a German will so often write obscurely, because his pleasure is in secluded rumination. A Frenchman always writes clearly, because his happiness is in social and intellectual intercourse. The first calls up shadowy dreams not less with his pen than with his pipe. The other is engaged in the commerce of thought in his study, not less than in the salon. And hence

the immeasurable superiority of the French to all other nations in social literature. What can be compared with the ease, the grace, the fascinating flow of their familiar letters? except perhaps their historical memoirs, which are, indeed, but another kind of familiar letters, addressed to society at large, by actors in the scene of public life, who have gladly escaped from its caution and reserve to enjoy the freedom of colloquial intercourse.

But such advantages are purchased at a price. The propensity and the power thus to render literature subservient to the embellishment of life, are continually tending to a fatal abuse. Recall the long series of men of genius, from Rabelais to Voltaire, who, becoming the victims of their own arts of fascination, have so often debased history, philosophy, and religion itself, to a frivolous pastime; the idle resource of the habitually idle. Remember how Bayle postpones every thing else to the amusement of his readers; how Montesquieu strews the Esprit des Lois with epigrams; and how even the illustrious Pascal illuminates the most awful of all discussions with the charms of his inimitable irony. Conjecture (for it is hopeless to measure) the dimensions of those pyramids of contes, novels, romances, fictitious memoirs, comedies, and vaudevilles, which the pens of French men and women have piled up with such a prodigality of labour and of talent; and then confess that, if the passion to captivate, and to be captivated, has rendered the style of France pellucid, it has also contributed not a little to render much of her literature frivolous.

The exquisite perspicuity of the French written language is further the index of the predominance in the French mind of the reasoning faculty; of that faculty which, with truth for its object, and logic for

its guide, strives to fathom all the depths, and to scale all the heights, of human knowledge; and, therefore, wages an inappeasable war against all the powers of mental darkness. The most subtle of analysts, the Frenchman dissects his ideas into their component parts with a touch at once so delicate and so firm, as almost to justify his exulting comparison of his own vocabulary with that of Athens. The most perspicuous of experimentalists, he explores with the keenest glance all the phenomena from which his conclusions are to be derived. The most precise of logicians, he reasons from such premises with the most undiscoloured mental vision. The most aspiring of theorists, he fixes an eagle gaze on the highest eminences of thought, and passes from one mountain-top of speculation to another, with a vigour and an ease peculiar to himself. And hence it has happened, that the writers of France have become either the teachers, or the interpreters, of science and of philosophy to the world at large—that their civil jurisprudence forms the most simple and comprehensive of all existing codes of law—and that their historians, their moralists, and their poets breathe freely in a transcendental atmosphere, too rare and attenuated to sustain the intellectual life of grosser minds than theirs.

And as their luminousness of style results from clearness of conception, and that clearness of conception from logical exactness, so that logical exactness, combining with the social spirit of the people, has rendered them the greatest of all modern masters in the art of rhetoric. For eloquence is well defined as "ignited logic;" and to the French speaker, logic supplies the fuel, and a genial sympathy the flame, of eloquence. The sermons of the pulpits of France, the éloges of her academics, the discourses of her

judges, the debates of her States General, of her parliaments, and of her legislative assemblies; nay, even the declamations of her revolutionary clubs, all attest that, in every age, and in every theatre, her orators have been gifted with admirable powers of agitating and subduing the wills of the crowds which have gathered round them.

But this logical structure of the understanding of our neighbours, while at once generating their characteristic perspicuity of style, and attested by it, has also given birth to that remorseless *Ergoisme* (no language but their own could have found place for such a word), by which they are no less distinguished. The helpless slaves of syllogism, they advance with unflinching intrepidity to any consequence, however startling, which seems to them legitimately to emerge from whatever they regard as well established premises; while they reject, with equal hardihood, any doctrine, however invaluable, which cannot be so demonstrated. They are rationalists in the correct sense of that much misused expression. That is, they are more than sceptical of all conclusions which unaided reason cannot reach, even though they may be reached by the aid of those guides, of which reason herself has taught the need, and the authority. They condemn, as unmeaning or superstitious, every opinion which cannot be enounced in terms perfectly unambiguous, even when such opinions are conversant with topics beyond the range of human observation and of man's experience. He who would estimate the extent to which such Pyrrhonism infects and degrades much of the literature of France, must pass a large part of his life in reading books, the knowledge of which a good man would regret, and a wise and humble man avoid.

In that invariable transparency of style in which the sense of all eminent French writers is conveyed to us, we may, I think, further discover the ancient, and even yet unsubdued, propensity of their nation and of themselves, to submit to established authority. In a jargon as new as it is offensive, the sacred right of insurrection has, indeed, been loudly proclaimed in our own days. But, from the days of Hugues Capet to those of Louis XVI., it was at once the pride and the habit of the French people to bow to law, or to the semblance of law, with an almost oriental subserviency. This national docility was the basis on which the Capetian kings, and the literary dictators of France, alike erected their absolute dominion. Hence that subordination of the individual characteristics of French writers to the generic characteristics of French literature. Hence it is that, in their external forms, history, poetry, philosophy, and even romance, ever correspond in France to certain elementary types, which the law of letters there has prescribed; and that, like so many crystals, each species is cast in its own normal mould, while all the species exhibit the same invariable transparency. The humblest writer for the tragic stage still works upon the model of the Cid or Athalie. The remembrance of the Misanthrope, or Les Joueurs, restrains him who would impart a new demeanour to comedy. Every new philosopher must imitate the method of Des Cartes; and Bourdaloue, to this moment, gives the law to all the pulpits of Paris.

That this conformity of the literature of France to the established canons of French criticism rescues the inferior artists from much extravagance and from many deformities, cannot be disputed; though it may, not unreasonably, be questioned, whether this advantage is not purchased at too dear a rate. For that docility, and the transparent clearness of style

to which all candidates for fame aspire as the one indispensable condition of success, indicate, if they do not also promote, the prevailing absence of the higher powers of the imagination. The Ossianic hero, whose dwelling is in the shadows and the mists, is haunted by spectres which are at once his terror, his delight, and his inspiration. As he draws nearer to the south, he quits them for objects more definite in form, more bright in colouring, but of far less power to agitate his bosom, or to kindle his enthusiasm. So in those sunny latitudes of thought, in which the French intellect finds its habitual and favourite abode, though there be neither clouds to overcast, nor vapours to obscure, the prospect, yet neither are there to be found those magical illusions which impart to more sombre skies their deep and mysterious significance. Though France herself denies, yet all other nations with one voice proclaim, her inferiority to her rivals in poetry and romance, and in all the other elevated fields of fiction. A French Dante, or Michael Angelo, or Cervantes, or Murillo, or Göethe, or Shakspeare, or Milton, we at once perceive to be a mere anomaly; a supposition which may indeed be proposed in terms, but which in reality is inconceivable and impossible.

I trust that I shall not appear to have been seduced by these more alluring topics, from my proposed and proper inquiry into the influence of the literature of France upon her civil polity. The first, and most essential, step towards the solution of that problem is to determine by what peculiarities that literature is characterised. The second, is to estimate (in however brief and cursory a manner) the genius of each of those illustrious men who have left upon the national mind the indelible impress of their imperishable

labours. If (as I observed in my last lecture) we can attain to some just appreciation of those patriarchal spirits, we shall understand their less gifted descendants, sufficiently at least, for the purpose which I have immediately in view; for the hereditary resemblance, or the indispensable imitation, may, as I have formerly stated, be traced with little difficulty from the intellectual ancestor throughout the whole of his intellectual lineage. To this attempt I will, therefore, now address myself.

Joinville, the son of the Sénéchal of Champagne, was born near the commencement of the 13th century, and was educated at the courts of Troyes and Provins; where, at that time, minstrelsy and music rendered the homage in which greatness delights, while they received, in turn, the homage which genius demands. Joinville listened to those strains and probably applauded them; for he writes as a worshipper of the harmonious and the beautiful; but he did not imitate them. Having succeeded to the sénéchaussée of Champagne, he became esquire carver to Saint Louis, and, at his summons, joined that ill-fated host which divided, with their royal leader, all the calamities of his Egyptian campaign and of his inactive exile in the Holy Land. But the enthusiasm of loyalty in Joinville, though sustained by dreams of an oriental principality, proved less enduring than the enthusiasm of religion in St. Louis, sustained as it was by the unfaltering hope of an eternal recompense. The Sénéchal, therefore, declined to accompany his master in his expedition to Tunis; but in the reign of Louis X., and at the age of more than ninety, dictated to an amanuensis the story, which he had doubtless often told before to his associates, of his friendship, his conversations, and his campaigns with the canonised

king. That story has survived to our own days, as a cherished part of the intellectual patrimony of the French people. In those pages the gallant and affectionate, but worldly minded, knight, and the magnanimous, pensive, and unworldly king are so skilfully contrasted, and the virtues and infirmities of each are so reflected and relieved by the other, that no one can contemplate them in that exquisite, though unlaboured, composition without understanding and admiring, without condemning and forgiving and loving them both. Over the whole picture the genial spirit of France glows with all the natural warmth which we seek in vain among the dry bones of the earlier chroniclers. Without the use of any didactic forms of speech, Joinville teaches the highest of all wisdom—the wisdom of love. Without the pedantry of the schools, he occasionally exhibits an eager thirst for knowledge, and a graceful facility of imparting it, which attest that he is of the lineage of the great father of history, and of those modern historians who have taken Herodotus for their model.

At the distance of eighty-six years from the completion of the Memorials of Joinville, appeared the yet more popular Chronicles of Froissart. The son of an heraldic painter, and born at Valenciennes, he was familiar from his childhood with the emblems of seigniorial dignity, and with the martial achievements on the French and Flemish frontiers. He became, however, not a soldier, but a priest; and then (such were the habits of his times) obtained distinction as a writer of erotic poetry. His verses appear to have recommended him to the favour of Philippa of Hainault, the Queen of Edward III., and, by her bounty, he was enabled to travel through France and England, where (as he says) he met

with more than two hundred great princes, and collected intelligence on all sides. For Froissart was the first of those French authors who have followed literature as their chief and peculiar calling. The earlier chroniclers had been either the narrators of what they had seen, or the transcribers or abbreviators of what they had read. He, on the other hand, made it the business of his life to gather, from the captains or the princes of his age, the materials for the commemoration of their exploits. Such information could not of course be so collected and employed, without some sacrifice of historical fidelity. But if he is sometimes unjust in the distribution of praise or blame, he is perfectly accurate in the delineation of the world in which he lived. He is not the apologist, but the enthusiast, of the age of chivalry. He does not exaggerate its virtues, for he could conceive of none more exalted; nor does he cancel its faults, for he was blind to their deformity.

For the task which he had undertaken he was qualified, not only by his restless activity and zeal, but by a retentive memory, a luminous understanding, a creative fancy, and an absolute exemption from all national prejudices. For though the Duke of Burgundy was the superior lord, and the king of France the suzerain, of his native city, yet Froissart considered himself neither as a Burgundian nor as a Frenchman, but as the subject of the Count of Namur, the immediate superior of Valenciennes. He wrote, therefore, not as a partisan, but as a cosmopolite. He also wrote, not as a philosopher, but as a painter of the great military spectacle of his age, in all its shifting aspects, in all its brilliant colours, and in all its ceaseless variety; and on that canvass he had the genius to group all

the chivalry and the heroism,—all the battles and the sieges,—all the fêtes and the tournaments of that agitated period, each in a mellow light, each in its due subordination to the rest, and each with a breadth of touch, and a truth of perspective, which redeems that vast array of figures, and that boundless complexity of action, from the reproach of confusion or disorder. In the art of picturesque writing, Froissart is not only without an equal, but without a competitor. In the art of narrative he has been surpassed by many, though even in his narration the spirit of his native land may be distinguished in the clearness and the natural sequence of his story, in the graceful adjustment of the several parts of it to each other, in the absence both of tumour in his pathetic passages, and of exaggeration in his historical incidents, and in the easy and unostentatious structure of the language in which his chronicle is composed.

He is, however, only a chronicler. Philippe de Comines is the earliest writer in the French tongue, who was entitled to assume the loftier title of an historian. Froissart had depicted great events; De Comines delineated great men. The one had contemplated the strife of kings and kingdoms as a spectator of the Isthmian games may have gazed at that heart-stirring spectacle. The other had watched the schemes of statesmen and the conflict of nations with some approach to that judicial serenity which we ascribe to a member of the Amphictyonic Council. Yet De Comines can hardly be said to have been an impartial judge between the princes who successively enjoyed his aid and his allegiance. He regards Charles the Rash with that affectionate interest which the heroism even of the unwise will excite

in the bosoms of the wisest... He contemplates Louis XI. with that combination of curiosity, of attachment, and of awe, which minds of more than ordinary power so often cherish for each other. The images of the fiery duke and of the crafty king were projected in bold relief in the imagination of this acute and vigilant observer, and the truth and distinctness of those images forms the great charm of his retrospect of his own eventful life. The higher charm of a just sensibility, whether to moral beauty or to the absence of it, is, however, wanting in his pages. Whether we study the successive masters of De Comines, as described by him, or himself, as incidentally pourtrayed in his delineation of those remarkable persons, we are reminded that both they and he were living in an age when Machiavelli was the teacher of princes, and when he numbered among his disciples, not only Louis of France, but our own Richard III., and the houses of Borgia and of the Medici. Profound and sagacious as he was, De Comines could neither serve such a sovereign, nor breathe the moral atmosphere of such times, with impunity. He is the unqualified admirer, if not the unscrupulous apologist, of his royal master; and seems insensible alike to the injustice of the ends at which he aimed, and to the baseness of the means by which he pursued them. Yet man is not less inconsistent in his faults and errors than in his virtues; and thus, even the utilitarian De Comines is unable to survey the revolutions in which he so largely participated, without an occasional, and apparently a heartfelt, acknowledgment that, in bringing to pass the disastrous catastrophe of the world's history, the will and the agency of man are but instruments by which the Divine will accomplishes its immutable

purposes of wisdom and of justice. In the subtlety of his analysis of the great characters of his generation,—in the force and discrimination of his portraits of them,—in the sagacity with which he explores, and the perspicuity with which he interprets, the hidden causes of the events in which they acted,—and in his vigorous dispersion of the mists with which ignorance or passion obscures the true aspects of human affairs, De Comines is emphatically a Frenchman. In the reverence with which, on reaching the impassable limits of human investigation, he ceases to inquire, and pauses to adore, he rises higher still, and becomes, not only a citizen, but a teacher of the great Christian commonwealth.

This great triumvirate of French literature before the Reformation (Joinville, Froissart, and De Comines) were not more exempt than their contemporaries from the bondage of Papal Rome. With the fall of spiritual freedom had fallen also the freedom of the intellect. As religion, which is the love of God and of man, had been darkened by superstition; so philosophy, which is the knowledge of God and man, had been buried under the dialectics of the school. The students of the middle ages had been thus inexorably debarred from those boundless fields of inquiry into the origin, the nature, the duties, and the destination of our race, in which the sages of Greece, and the fathers of the Church, had consumed their laborious lives. All moral truths had passed into so many articles of the faith. All articles of faith had been reduced into so many dogmatic formulas, and all those formulas had the syllogism for their common basis. To multiply such formulas by the multiplication of such syllogisms, was the single

exercise left open to inventive minds; and to minds not inventive it was permitted only to accept, to remember, and to repeat those peremptory conclusions of the schoolmen. The great end and object of their teaching was to convert the human mind into an intellectual mechanism, by which the same or similar consequences would infallibly, and at all times, be reproduced from the same established premises. And while to satisfy that craving for general principles, which is the indestructible instinct of our nature, the Church of Rome thus employed her array of doctors, seraphic and irrefragable; she also employed the scourge, the prison, and the brand, to silence those who presumed to quench that sacred thirst, by ascending for themselves to the fountains of truth which God has opened, both in the Book of Life and in his unwritten revelations in the human heart. For these reasons it is that Joinville and Froissart skim so lightly, though so gracefully, over the surface of the great social movements which they record; and that even De Comines makes no attempt to draw any solution of the great problems lying in his path, from those depths with which the theology and the philosophy of later times have rendered our modern historians even ostentatiously familiar.

With the revival of letters, a mighty change came over the spirit of the literature of France. The first and immediate effect, indeed, was to provoke a rapturous and extravagant imitation of the Greek and Latin models. Grey-headed men went to school to study Cicero and Homer. To satisfy the demand for such knowledge, Henry Stephen and Erasmus became, at once, writers and compositors for the press. Athenian and Roman costumes fluttered through the streets and the salons of Paris. A Macedonian pha-

lanx was enrolled out of the French army; and, at the approach of death, learned men imitated the dying declamations of Cato and Antoninus.

But then came the Reformation, not only to sweep away these follies, but also to dispel many other errors far more formidable than these. The alliance between Christian antiquity and Pagan antiquity triumphed over the fictitious traditions of the Church, and the oscillating logic of the School. The Decretals of Isidore, and the Summa Theologiæ of St. Thomas Aquinas, retreated into the limbo of dethroned and departed idols. The human mind once more breathed freely, and men of genius appeared to give utterance to the thoughts and feelings of an emancipated world.

I almost hesitate to pronounce, in immediate juxtaposition, the names of the second great literary triumvirate, who, in the 16th century, assumed that high office in France. Yet it is, I think, but an apparent paradox to assert, that between Rabelais, Calvin, and Montaigne, the parallelisms are as remarkable as the contradictions.

Rabelais, the son of an innkeeper at Chinon, was born at that place in the year 1483. He became a Franciscan friar, a deacon, and a priest in holy orders; and then, at the mature age of forty-two, commenced the study of medicine in the college at Montpellier. Various medical treatises were the fruit of those labours; and the reputation derived from them was sufficient to obtain for him the office of physician to the public hospital at Lyons. But his professional books proving unsaleable, Rabelais, to indemnify his bookseller, wrote and published his Pantagruel, or Chronique Gargantuine, of which (as he says) more copies were sold in two months than of the Bible in ten years. Having thus discovered the secret of his

power, he next produced the Gargantua; the work which has secured for him the admiration of all subsequent ages, though the reverence of none. It is a romance in which Rabelais may be considered as depicting the habits, opinions, errors, crimes, and follies of that age of religious and intellectual revolutions, in the centre of which he lived. Yet the critics have doubted, and must ever continue to doubt—whether Gargantua and his son Pantagruel are actual portraits of those who led the armaments (literary, theological, or military) of those times, or are mere impersonations of those abstract qualities by which the world was then governed—whether Panurge and Friar John had any living prototypes amongst the men of the 16th century—or whether the one is but a name for mediocrity, ceasing to be honest as it becomes conspicuous; and the other a name for sensuality, rescued from contempt by a shrewd and jovial spirit. But why investigate these and such other riddles, proposed by their author in avowed defiance of any such attempt? Why, indeed, read at all a book of which not only the general scope, but almost every page, is enigmatical? Why squander time and patience on a writer who, of set purpose, makes his readers dependent on the guidance of some dull and doubtful commentator? I have no answer to these questions, or can answer them only by very earnestly dissuading the perusal of the lives of Pantagruel and Gargantua. For those passages which do reward the toil of the student are separated from each other, not only by this profound obscure, but by foul abysses of impurity, which no skill or caution can always succeed in overleaping. I know not how to describe them in terms at once accurate and decorous, except by borrowing Mr. Carlyle's denunciation of a work of Diderot's, and

saying with him, or in words resembling his, that he who, even undesignedly, shall come into contact with these parts of Rabelais' great work, should forthwith plunge into running waters, and regard himself, for the rest of the day, as something more than ceremonially unclean.

Yet he whose business, or whose determination, it is to appreciate aright the civil, and therefore the literary, history of France, must needs pay this heavy price of knowledge. For, in that history, the romance of Gargantua is an indispensable link. From the revival of heathen antiquity, Rabelais had gathered a mass of learning resembling the diet of his own Pantagruel, who had 4,600 cows milked every morning for his breakfast. From the revival of Christian antiquity, he had learnt to despise the authority and the superstitions of the Church of Rome; without, at the same time, learning to reverence the authority and the doctrines of the Gospel. He thus traversed the boundless expanse of human knowledge, without the chart or compass which may be discovered only in that knowledge which is not human, but divine. He traversed it under the guidance of his own wit, sagacity, and humour; a wit, vaulting at a bound, from the arctic to the antarctic poles of thought; a sagacity embracing all the higher questions of man's social existence, and many of the deeper problems of his moral constitution; and a humour which fairly baffles all attempts to analyse or to describe it. For it was the result, not of natural temperament alone, but also of the most assiduous and severe studies. The language of Greece had become as familiar to him as his mother-tongue; and, while he learnt from Galen and Hippocrates to investigate the properties of living or of inert matter, he was trained, by Plato, to spiritual

meditation, and by Lucian to a scepticism and a buffoonery, alike audacious and unintermitted. From the union of such a disposition and of such discipline, emerged the strange phenomenon of a philosopher in his revels. In contemplating it one knows not, as it has been well said, "whether to wonder most that such wisdom should ever assume the mask of folly, or that such folly should permit the growth and development of any true wisdom." It is, however, an apparent, rather than a real, difficulty. The wisdom is never sublime, and the folly but seldom abject. Each is but a different aspect of a nature, of which the parts are, indeed, inharmonious, but not incompatible —of a genuine epicurean gifted with gigantic powers, but of cold affections, and of debased appetites; ever worshipping and obeying his one idol, pleasure, though at one time she bids him soar to the empyrean, and at another commands him to wallow in the sty.

Rabelais was wise in the sense in which any man may be so who delights in the strenuous exercise of a powerful understanding, and loves thinking for thinking's sake. He was wise to detect popular fallacies, and to discern unpopular truths. He was wise to see how the young might be better educated, laws better made, nations better governed, wars more vigorously conducted, and peace more securely maintained. He was wise to call down both theology and philosophy from the skies above to the earth beneath us. And he was not more wise than eloquent; sometimes arraying truth in the noblest forms of speech, though more frequently enhancing her beauty by enveloping and contrasting her with the homeliest. At his prolific touch his native tongue germinated into countless new varieties of expression; and the mines of wealth, both intellectual

and verbal, which he bequeathed to future ages, after being wrought by multitudes in each, still appear inexhaustible.

The wisdom of Rabelais was, however, of the world, worldly. It never ascended to the eternal fountains of light, nor descended to illuminate the dark places of the earth. It neither sought to interpret the awful mysteries of our nature, nor bowed down to adore in the contemplation of them. It aimed at no exalted ends, nor did it ever lead the way through any rugged and self-denying paths. It expressed neither sympathy for the wretchedness, nor pity for the sorrows, of mankind; but was satisfied to be shrewd, and witty, and comical upon them all. To the keen gaze of Rabelais, the frauds, and follies, and ignorance, and licentiousness, of the papal court and priesthood afforded endless matter of scorn and merriment; but to his last hour he lived in their outward garb and communion. To that penetrating eye had been clearly revealed the majesty of the truth which the Reformers taught, and the majesty of the sufferings which they endured in its defence; but not one glow of enthusiasm could they ever kindle in his bosom, as they toiled in indigence, and died in martyrdom, to evangelise the world. Secure in the absolution of Clement VII. for whatever he had done and written against the Church, and secure in the licence of Francis I. to publish whatever else he might please, Rabelais delighted to assume the character of a chartered libertine, or, as it might almost be said, of an intellectual debauchee. And yet, voluptuary, scoffer, and sceptic as he was, his laughter was so hearty, his glee so natural, his frolic so riotous, and his buffoonery so irresistible, that he became, not merely the tolerated,

but the favoured and privileged Momus of his times. He became also a proof to all later times, that, by the great mass of mankind, anything will be forgiven or permitted to genius, when, abandoning its native supremacy, it condescends to undertake the strangely inappropriate office of master of the revels.

In thus dwelling on the literary career of Rabelais, my object, however, has chiefly been to show how it illustrates the predominance, in all the great authors of France, of the same essential characteristics. His possession and abuse of their logical spirit conducted him to scepticism, if not to infidelity. His possession and abuse of their sympathetic spirit immersed him in a ceaseless, bacchanalian riot. Deep and fatal are the traces of his example and of his fame in the literary history of his native land. With him commences the lineage of those eminent spirits who have waged war in France against the moral and religious convictions, and even against the social decencies of the Christian world; a war productive of some of the sorest troubles, or rather, let us say, of some of the heaviest chastisements which have rebuked the offences of the nations of modern Europe.

If it were my object to show how contrarieties are related, I know not how I could better accomplish it than by the immediate transition, which my subject compels me to make, from Francis Rabelais to John Calvin; for, probably, no two men of commanding minds were ever more curiously contrasted with each other, as certainly no two minds were ever enshrined in bodies more dissimilar. To look upon, Rabelais was a drunken Silenus, Calvin a famished Ugolino. The one emptied his bottle before he wrote, while he was writing, and after he had written; the other contented himself with a repast of bread and water

once in each six-and-thirty hours. Reposing in his easy chair, the merry doctor was hailed as lord of misrule by all the jovial spirits of his age; enthroned in the consistory of Geneva, the inexorable divine was dreaded as the disciplinarian of himself and of the whole subject city. The witty physician was L'Allegro, the austere minister Il Penseroso, of their generation. The reader of the Gargantua yields by turns to disgust, to admiration, and to merriment; but Democritus himself would not have found matter for one passing smile throughout the whole of the Christian Institute. To Rabelais, human life appeared a farce as broad as the knights of Aristophanes; to Calvin, a tragedy more dismal than the Agamemnon of Æschylus. And as they wrote, so they also lived. The traditional stories about Rabelais, if true, attest his love, and, even if untrue, they attest his reputed love, of that kind of wit which is called practical; all the traditions of Calvin represent him as a man at whose appearance mirth instantly took flight. The gay doctor is made in these tales to play off his tricks on the graduates in medicine, on the Chancellor du Prât, on the king and queen of France, and even on the mule of the pope himself; while the solemn theologian makes his domiciliary visits to ascertain that no dinner table at Geneva was rendered the pretext for levity of discourse, or for excess of diet.

What, then, is the congruity on which to found any comparison between these most incongruous minds? The answer is (to borrow the word once more), that they were both devoted *ergoists*, each of them being at once a mighty master, and a submissive slave, of logic. To what strange extravagancies it conducted or accompanied Rabelais, I have already attempted to

show; the consequences to which it impelled Calvin were of far deeper significance.

The great Saxon patriarch of the Reformation had known neither the same mastery nor the same bondage. From the inspired volume, indeed, Luther had deduced the doctrines of the churches destined to bear his name. But as his meditations on it led him further and further from the tenets and usages of the Church of Rome, he paused. He had been borne onwards till he came in sight of conclusions against which his heart reclaimed, and of practices against which his conscience protested. At the bidding of those remonstrances, he was content to be inconclusive, if not illogical. He had left no errors unassailed, but was content to leave many truths undecided. He had drawn from his Bible principles, the more remote consequences of which he did not attempt to draw. He had learnt many lessons of tolerance and some of indifference; and, if he were now living amongst us, would hardly escape being stigmatised as a latitudinarian for that dislike of religious dogmatism, and that disregard of the varieties of external observances in public worship, which marked his declining years.

Most dissimilar were the spirit and the conduct of John Calvin. Before him, also, lay the inspired volume. He looked on it as containing, not merely the chief, but rather the only, premises from which the truths of Christianity could be either learnt or inferred. While he was composing his great work Luther was still alive. But they who are, or who claim to be, most familiar with his writings assert, that no mention of the great German Reformer occurs in any part of them. If so, this remarkable silence may probably be referred, partly to the self-complacent nationality and contempt for the foreigner, so common

to almost all French writers; but still more to his determination to traverse the vast ocean of theology, unaided by the charts of any preceding navigator. He seems to have adopted the Baconian apophthegm, that "from any one truth all truth may be inferred;" but with the addition, that these all-embracing inferences must be drawn by no other hand than that of John Calvin himself. There is something even sublime in the courage with which his unaverted eye confronts every difficulty, however formidable, and contemplates every consequence, however repulsive. Without presuming to hazard any opinion on the truth of his peculiar system, and not even pretending to understand it aright, I can yet perceive, that, from his apparent meaning, any less intrepid logician than himself must have turned aside with many painful misgivings. Yet I so much distrust my own ability to exhibit an exact summary of his doctrines, that, declining any such attempt, I shall entirely rely on the construction which they have usually received, not less from his friends, than from his enemies. He not only advances from the great article of justification by faith alone to a denial of the ground on which the necessity of a holy life had been maintained by the Roman Church, but *seems* to place that necessity on grounds alike insecure and unintelligible. He *seems* to deduce from that article, the opinion that penitence is impossible to the unregenerate, and useless to the elect. He *seems* to ascribe to the Holy Scriptures the doctrine of an absolute fatalism. He *seems* to discover in them the revelation of the awful dogma, that He who is love has called into being a large part of the race of man, foredoomed, by his own immutable decree, to an eternal existence of hopeless misery. He *seems* to interpret the word of God as teaching that the Church and the State are not two bodies, in alli-

ance with, or distinct from, each other, but the same body, one and indivisible; and that, therefore, all legitimate human government is, in effect, a theocracy. He found, or supposed himself to find, in his Bible, that episcopacy was a human, a needless, or an injurious invention,—that holy orders could not be effectually transmitted from one generation of Christian ministers to another,—that the baptismal font was superfluous,—the use of unleavened bread in the holy eucharist superstitious,—the reverence of that sacrament as a divine mystery, to a great extent, a a human figment,—the festivals of the Church an abuse,—and her ancient ceremonials an unmeaning pantomime. Thus taking away the support which feeble man demands under the burden of a pure and absolute spiritualism, he stood erect and triumphant amidst the wreck of the ecclesiastical opinions, institutions, and observances of bygone ages; but not of ecclesiastical opinions alone. Under his guidance, and by a still further use of his remorseless logic, the secular commonwealth, also, was shaken to its foundations. Geneva became the cradle of revolt against half the monarchies of Europe; and, under the various names of Presbyterians, Insurgents, Gueux, Huguenots, and Puritans, his disciples in Scotland, in the United Provinces, in France, and in England, proved their fidelity to the political doctrines, and even to the example, of the great founder of Calvinism.

If it were admitted that all the links of Calvin's argumentation were as indissoluble as he supposed them to be, it would still remain to inquire, whether his opinions are not refuted by the nature of the inferences with which they were thus pregnant. For the reasoning faculty is not the only light, nor is it even the surest of the lights, given to man for his guidance

amidst the shadows which encircle him. We accept the conclusions of our reason, because the laws and structure of our nature render it inevitable. We accept the assurances of our moral instincts for the very same reason. But there can be no conflicting necessities. There is, indeed, no meaning in any such words. Never yet did nature say one thing, and reason say another. Those voices are in eternal harmony, though to us they may occasionally seem at discord. When such a seeming dissonance arises, a wise man will consider whether it is not more probable that his syllogisms are vulnerable, than that his heart misinterprets the law written on it by God himself. In the strength of our instincts, he has graciously provided a compensation for the weakness of our intellects. The best reasoned is not always the most reasonable conclusion; and when, from any logical conclusion, the soul and conscience recoil, we may well believe that there is some real, though latent, error, either in the basis on which we have argued, or the superstructure of argument which we have erected upon it.

Calvin admitted no such belief. He took no security against the illusions of logic. He vindicated the tyranny of reason over each man, and of the reason of John Calvin over all men. And they who, like him, are by their birthright the intellectual sovereigns of our race, have ever been greeted by the subject multitude with applause, or rather with exultation, even when their lawful authority has passed into a lawless despotism. His Institution Chrétienne was, therefore, received with unbounded delight. We may, indeed, reject the story, that a thousand editions of it were sold in his own lifetime; but we cannot dispute that, during a century and a

half, it exercised an unrivalled supremacy over a large part of Protestant Europe. For that dominion it was indebted, in part, to the novelty and comprehensiveness of the design it accomplished, — to the vast compass of learning, scriptural, patristic, and historical, which it embraced, — to the depth and the height of the morality which it inculcated, — and to the calm but energetic keenness with which it exposed the errors of his adversaries. But the popularity and the influence of this remarkable book is also, in part, to be ascribed to its literary merits. Calvin has been described as the Bossuet of his age. Of all the French authors whom France had as yet produced, he was the most philosophical when he speculated, the most sublime when he adored, the most methodical and luminous in the development of truth, the most acute in the refutation of error, and the most obedient to that law or spirit of his nation, which demands symmetry in the proportions, harmony in the details, and concert in all the parts of every work of art, whether it be wrought by the pen, the pencil, or the chisel. In the ninth chapter of Bossuet's Histoire des Variations may, indeed, be found the best, as it is a very reluctant, eulogy on the literary excellence of his great rival and predecessor. Even in the haughty gloom which the Bishop of Meaux discovers in the style and tone of the reformer of Geneva, there is a not inappropriate interest. The beautiful lake of that city, and the mountains which encircle it, lay before his eyes as he wrote; but they are said to have suggested to his fancy no images, and to have drawn from his pen not so much as one transient allusion. With his mental vision ever directed to that melancholy view of the state and prospects of our race, which he had discovered in the

book of life, it would, indeed, have been incongruous to have turned aside to depict any of those glorious aspects of the creative benignity which were spread around him in the book of nature. Whatever else may have been the merits of the Calvinistic system, it, at least, failed to impart elasticity to the spirits, or freedom to the thoughts of those who first embraced it. After the rise and fall of a few generations, it even failed to retain them within the precincts of evangelical truth, and the doctrines of Socinus at length superseded those of Calvin, not only in New England, in France, and in Switzerland, but even in his own Geneva. On a future occasion I may, perhaps, attempt to show how this degeneracy had its root in the despotic logic of the founder of those churches. My more immediate purpose is to trace out the progress of that despotism in the literature of his native country.

As in most other tyrannies, so in this, the immediate effect of the servitude into which Calvin had subdued the minds of his disciples was to provoke a formidable revolt. When he was giving his latest touches to his Institution Chrétienne, Michel de Montaigne, then in his twenty-second year, had just taken his seat in the Parliament of Bourdeaux. That he afterwards became a deputy in the States General of Blois, though maintained by no inconsiderable authorities, seems to me impossible; but it is clear that his early manhood was devoted to public, and especially to judicial, affairs. He was thus brought into contact with the busy world at the moment of a greater agitation of human society than had occurred since the overthrow of the Roman empire. Marvellous revolutions, and discoveries still more marvellous, in the world of letters, of politics,

of geography, and of religion,—the warfare of inappeasable passions,—the working of whatever is most base, and of whatever is most sublime, in our common nature,—and calamities which might seem to have fulfilled the most awful of the apocalyptic visions, had passed in rapid succession before the eyes of this acute and curious observer. It was an unwelcome and repulsive spectacle. He turned from it to seek the shelter and the repose of his hereditary mansion. In that retirement he indulged, or cherished, a spirit inflexibly opposed to the spirit by which his native country was convulsed. The age was idolatrous of novelties; and, therefore, Montaigne lived in the retrospect of a remote antiquity. It was an age of restless ambition; and, therefore, he passively committed himself and his fortunes to the current of events. The minds of other men were exploring the foundations, and criticising the superstructure, of every social polity; and, therefore, his mind was averted altogether from the affairs of the commonwealth. Because his neighbours yielded themselves to every gust of passion, he must be passionless. Because the times were treacherous, he must punctiliously cherish his personal honour. Because they were inhuman, he cultivated all the amenities of life. Because calamity swept over the world, he was enamoured of epicurean ease. Heroism was the boast of not a few, and to their virtues he paid the homage of an incredulous obeisance. Dogmatism was the habit of very many; and, therefore, Montaigne must surrender himself to an almost universal scepticism.

The contrast was as captivating as it was complete. With a temper easily satisfied,—with affections as tranquil as they were kindly,—with a curiosity ever

wakeful, but never impetuous,—with competency, health, friends, books, and leisure, Montaigne had all the means of happiness which can be brought within the reach of those to whom life is not a self-denying existence, but a pleasant pastime. Yet, with him, it was the pastime of an active, enlightened, and amiable, mind. The study of man as a member of society was his chosen pursuit, but he conducted it in a mode altogether his own. The individual man, Michel Montaigne, such as he would be in every imaginable relation and office of society, was the subject of his daily investigation. He became, of all egotists, the most pleasant, versatile, and comprehensive. He produced complete sketches of himself with an air of the most unreserved frankness, and in a tone frequently passing from quiet seriousness to graceful badinage. He describes his tastes, his humours, his opinions, his frailties, his pursuits, and his associates, with the most exuberant fertility of invention, and has wrought out a general delineation of our common humanity from the profound knowledge of a single member of it. And, as the variety is boundless, so is the unity well sustained. His essays are a mirror in which every reader sees his own image reflected, but in which he also sees the image of Montaigne reflecting it. There he is, ever changing, and yet ever the same. He looks on the world with a calm indifference, which would be repulsive were it not corrected by his benevolent curiosity about its history and its prospects. He has not one malignant feeling about him, except it be towards the tiresome, and especially towards such of them as provoke his yawns and his resentment by misplaced and by commonplace wisdom. He has a quick relish for pleasure, but with a preference for

such pleasures as are social, inoffensive, and easily procured. He has a love for virtue, but chiefly, if not exclusively, when she exacts no great effort, nor any considerable sacrifice. He loves his fellow-men, but does not much, or seriously, esteem them. He loves study and meditation, but stipulates that they shall expose him to no disagreeable fatigue. He cherishes every temper which makes life pass sociably and pleasantly. He takes things as he finds them in perfect good humour, makes the best of them all, and never burdens his mind with virtuous indignation, unattainable hopes, or profitless regrets. In short, as exhibited in his own self-portraiture, he is an Epicurean, who knows how to make his better dispositions tributary to his comfort, and also knows how to prevent his evil tempers from troubling his repose.

The picture of himself, which Montaigne thus holds up to his readers as a representation of themselves, is not sublime, nor is it beautiful; but it is a striking and a masterly likeness. It is drawn with inimitable grace and freedom, and with the most transparent perspicuity; and they who are best entitled to pronounce such a judgment, admire in his language a richness and a curious felicity, unknown to any preceding French writers. Even they to whom his tongue is not native, can perceive that his style is the easy, the luminous, and the flexible vehicle of his thoughts, and never degenerates into a mere apology for the want of thought; and that his imagination, without ever disfiguring his ideas, however abstract, and however subtle they may be, habitually clothes them with the noblest forms, and the most appropriate colouring.

But my more immediate object is, to notice the

relation in which Montaigne stands to the other great moral teachers of his native land, and to those habits of thought by which France is, and has so long been, characterised. The antagonist in every thing of the spirit of his times, he seems to have regarded with peculiar aversion, the peremptory confidence by which the great controversy of his age was conducted, both by the adherents of Rome, and by the founder of Calvinism. Because they would admit no doubt whatever, every form of doubt found harbour with him. Because they were dogmatists, he must be a sceptic.

In M. Faugère's recent edition of Pascal's Thoughts, will be found the famous dialogue on the scepticism of Montaigne, between Pascal and De Sacy, — a delineation so exquisite, that it seems mere folly to attempt any addition to it. The genius of Port Royal, however, exhibits there its severity, not less than its justice; and a few words may not be misplaced in the attempt to mitigate a little of the rigour of the condemnation. Montaigne was a sceptic (as very many are), because his sagacity and diligence were buoyant enough to raise his mind to the clouds which float over our heads, but were not buoyant enough to elevate him to the pure regions of light which lie beyond them. His learning was various rather than recondite. It was drawn chiefly from Latin authors, and from the Latin authors of a degenerating age; not from Cicero or Virgil, but from Seneca and Pliny. Of Greek he knew but little, though he was profoundly conversant with the translation of Plutarch, with which Amyot had lately rendered all French readers familiar. From such masters Montaigne did not learn, and could not have

learnt, the love of truth. They taught him rather to content himself with loose historical gossip, and with half formed notions in philosophy. They taught him not how to resolve, but how to amuse himself with, the great problems of human existence. They encouraged his characteristic want of seriousness and earnestness of purpose. From such studies, and from the events of his life and times, he learnt to flutter over the surface of things, and to traverse the whole world of moral, religious, and political inquiry, without finding, and without seeking, a resting-place. His aimless curiosity and versatile caprice form at once the fascination and the vice of his writings, though not indeed their only vice. In this presence I am bound to add the warning, that the name of Montaigne belongs to that melancholy roll of the great French sceptical writers — Rabelais, Montesquieu, Bayle, Voltaire, and Diderot, — who, not content to assault the principles of virtue, have so far debased themselves, as laboriously to stimulate the disorderly appetites of their readers.

Yet the scepticism of Montaigne was not altogether such as theirs is. He has none of their dissolute revelry in confounding the distinctions of truth and falsehood, of good and evil. He does not, like some of them, delight in the darkness with which he believes the mind of man to be hopelessly enveloped. He rather placidly and contentedly acquiesces in the conviction that truth is beyond his reach. He could amuse himself with doubt, and play with it. With few positive and no dearly cherished opinions, he had no ardour for any opinion, and had not the slightest desire to make proselytes to his own Pyrrhonism. He was, on the contrary, to the last degree, tolerant of dissent from his own judgment; and, in the lack of

other opponents, was prompt, and even glad, to contradict himself. Of all human infirmities, dulness, and obscurity, and vehemence, are those from which he was most exempt. Of all human passions, the zeal which fires the bosom of a missionary is that from which he was the most remote. We associate with him as one of the most pleasant of all our illustrious companions, and quit him as one of the least impressive of all our eminent instructors. Into what new forms his sceptical and his social spirit passed in the age next succeeding his own, will be the subject of the lecture which I hope to address to you when we next meet.

LECTURE XIX.

ON THE POWER OF THE PEN IN FRANCE.

In my last lecture I observed how Rabelais (the earliest of the three dominant intellects of France in the 16th century) found endless matter for the broadest mirth in the mysteries of our mortal existence;—how Calvin derived from Holy Writ the peremptory solution of them all;—and how Montaigne amused himself with the inquiry, whether such questions were really susceptible of any answer whatever? To that inquiry, his friend, disciple, and imitator, Francis Charron, devoted his once celebrated Treatise on Wisdom. Montaigne had played with the problem, "Que sais-je?" and had inscribed it as a motto on the scales he kept by him. Charron inscribed not only on his book, but on the portals of his house at Condom, the words, "Je ne sçai." The torch which had thus been passed from hand to hand was at length grasped by Réné Des Cartes—a genius who, in profound,

intense, and persevering thought surpassed Calvin himself, and rose above Rabelais and Montaigne in the expansion of his mind, still more than he fell below them in wit, and grace, and playfulness.

Des Cartes (the son of a councillor in the Parliament of Rennes) was born at La Haye, in Touraine, in the year 1596. As a volunteer at the siege of La Rochelle, and afterwards in the army commanded by Prince Maurice in Holland, he studied the passions of man as developed in their wildest excitement; and then travelled far and long to observe the manners and the prevalent opinions of the various nations of Europe. In one of these journeys, finding himself (as he informs us) in a wild and sequestered scene on the frontiers of Bavaria, he spent the whole day in a sunny nook, passing from thought to thought till he had at last conceived the desire of reducing his mind to a state of absolute nakedness, in which, divested of all his former ideas and affections, he might retain nothing except the will and the power to investigate truth. This singular wish was as singularly accomplished. He began by inhabiting, in the midst of Paris, a hermitage so inaccessible, that his friends could never discover it, until, after passing two years in that retirement, he became convinced that the Parisian air was possessed by a subtle poison, disposing him to vain and chimerical imaginations. From these intellectual miasmata he therefore escaped to the town of Egmont, in Holland, and resided there during the next twenty-five years in a state of unbroken meditation, solitude, and repose. The University of Utrecht at length, by preferring against him the charge of atheism, drove him once more to Paris as a place of shelter. But at Paris, also, he sought security in vain, and was compelled to accept

from Queen Christina, the welcome which both his adopted and his native countries had refused him. He died shortly after his arrival in Sweden, a victim to that severe and ungenial climate.

Of the fifty-four years which Des Cartes thus passed on earth, more than thirty were spent in a state of self-abnegation such as no anchorite has ever emulated. It was little that his sleep, and diet, and exercise were exactly regulated by the single purpose of securing, to the utmost possible extent, the independence of his soul on his body. His mental appetites were subjugated to a still more rigid discipline. To secure to his reason an undisputed supremacy over all his other faculties, he laboured, not only to cast down every idol of the cavern, but to consign to oblivion all the interests, the sentiments, and the events, with which either his heart, or his imagination, had ever been occupied. He even attempted to emancipate himself from the memory of those deceptive languages, Greek and Latin, in which such subtle disguises have been found for so many mental illusions. That he might ascend to the sanctuary of truth, he thus aspired to become a pure abstraction of defæcated intellect.

The result of this sublime and persevering effort was to give birth to the Cartesian philosophy, which has so long exercised, and which even yet retains, so powerful an influence over the minds of the educated classes of society in France. The explanation of that celebrated system falls within the province of other teachers in the university. I shall attempt only to notice one or two of its elementary principles; and I shall do so in the fewest possible words, because I am well aware that no words of

mine, however multiplied, could render intelligible to my audience doctrines which I myself understand so very imperfectly.

"Cogito, ergo sum," is the massive foundation-stone of the colossal edifice erected by Des Cartes. That famous proposition, though really "the well ripened fruit of long delay," may perhaps sound not only as a truism, but as of all truisms the most meagre. Such a judgment would, however, prove nothing except the ignorance and incompetency of the judge.

"I think, therefore I exist," is not the fragment of a syllogism which might be reconstructed thus, — "Whatever thinks, exists. But I think. Therefore, I exist." It is rather an enthymeme — that is, an immediate sequence of two propositions, of which the second is the necessary offspring of the first. "I think"—that is, I am conscious of the act of thinking. Myself and my thoughts are a plurality, not a unity. *They* are the objects of which *I* am the subject. My consciousness of them is my adjudication that such objects exist. Or suppose that I can doubt even the existence of my own thoughts. Well, even so; that very doubt is itself a thought of which I am conscious. Let my scepticism be so absolute, and so universal, as to involve in uncertainty every other conceivable position, yet that very scepticism is the affirmation of myself as a thinking being.

Here then the naked reason has at length set her foot upon one resting-place, narrow if you will, but yet firm and immovable. Here is one truth which cannot be assailed even by doubt itself; or, rather, here is a truth which doubt itself does but verify and confirm. Nor is this a barren position. It is rather

a ground which, when duly cultivated, is prolific of results of the highest moment to every thinking being.

For, first, it ascertains the fact that, to each man, his own consciousness is the primary evidence and the ultimate test of truth. But each man is conscious of many ideas, and each man, who is accustomed to meditate on the subject, becomes aware that his ideas are separable into two classes, distinguished from each other by the difference of the sources in which they originate. One class of our ideas we derive from the testimony of our senses, and from the reflections we make on that testimony. All our ideas of this class are more or less fallacious, because they all partake of the infirmities of our bodily organs, and of the weakness of our mental powers. The other class of our ideas do *not* originate with our senses, because they do not correspond with anything presented to our notice in the exterior world. They are, therefore, a part of our very existence, and are coeval with it,—not, indeed, actively, but potentially,—not as thoughts already developed, but as pregnant germs of thought, to be awakened from their slumber, and ripened into maturity, in the progress of our lives. The first of these classes of ideas may be called Factitious, the second Innate.

Now, amongst our ideas, there is one which challenges peculiar attention. It represents to us a Being self-existent, infinite, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, supremely holy, just, and true, and absolutely perfect. To the object of that idea we give the name of God. But in the world of sensible things, nothing exists corresponding with this idea, nor anything, from our meditations on which we could have derived it. Consequently it belongs, not

to the class of our factitious, but to the class of our innate, ideas.

But if my idea of God be an innate idea, it must have been potentially at least and as yet an undeveloped germ, a part of my very original existence, and coeval with it. My existence and my idea of God must, therefore, both have sprung from the same fontal source. What, then, is that source?

First. My existence, and my coeval idea of God, did not originate with myself. If I really had the power and the will to call myself into being, which is of all powers the most eminent, I must also have had the inferior power and the will to clothe myself with all the perfections embraced in my innate idea of God. But I am invested with no approach to any one of those perfections.

Secondly. My existence, and my coeval idea of God, did not originate with my progenitors. For, if they really called me into being, they must also have called into existence my innate idea of God; that is, they must have infused into me a type of perfection infinitely transcending any prototype residing in themselves. They must have produced an effect with which the producing cause was not in the slightest degree commensurate.

Thirdly. My existence, and my coeval idea of God, did not originate in the concurrence of a plurality of causes; for, on that supposition, plurality, which is imperfection, called into being my idea of the Divine Unity, which is perfection.

It follows that the origin of my existence, and of my idea of God, must be a cause distinct from myself and from my progenitors—must be a cause possessing the attribute of unity—and must be a cause invested with all other qualities of self-existence,

infinity, omniscience, and the like, which that idea embraces. But such qualities can exist only as the forms of some substance. That substance must be a living, conscious, personal Being; and to that Being we assign the name of Deity.

See then the naked reason setting her foot upon a second rock; a resting-place, not contracted and narrow like the first, but sufficiently broad and stable to sustain the superincumbent weight of all divine and of all human knowledge. Man's consciousness of his own thoughts has demonstrated his own existence. Man's consciousness of his own innate idea of God has demonstrated the existence of a Deity, in whom every attribute of wisdom, power, and goodness meet in absolute perfection.

Now, of those perfections, truth is one; for the opposite of truth, that is, falsehood and error, are imperfect. If, then, he who is the source of my being, and of my innate ideas, be true, those ideas must themselves be true; that is, there must exist some objective realities of which they are the types. As God is the cause of those ideas, so must He also be the substance of them. They are the marks of the great architect indelibly impressed upon his workmanship, man.

Behold, then, the third conquest attained by the pure and naked reason. In the innate ideas of the human mind she has acquired a mirror which represents to her, with infallible accuracy, many of the otherwise inscrutable secrets of the material and immaterial universe

Advancing from this basis, Des Cartes next proceeds to inquire into the relations between the Creator and his creation, between the body and the soul, between mind and matter. He teaches, if I mistake

not (and I am deeply conscious of my liability to mistake), that between things spiritual and things material there is really nothing in common; that between the immortality of the one and the decays and dissolution of the other there is really no contradiction; that as created things remove further and further from their source, they become more and more multiplied, diverse, and dissimilar; but that the Divine Unity is the common basis of them all; that science is but the path by which we return to that unity; that it is a continually progressive generalisation — the constant discovery of new harmonies, and reconcilement of seeming differences, until at length the whole universe shall be revealed as under the rule of some few laws—and those laws as dependent on God—and God himself as the common centre of all, as one in every form and species of unity, the single fountain of universal life.

To determine how that divine causation acts and what it is, and how far that which we call cause and effect has any analogy with the creative power and its results, Des Cartes moves onward into a complete system of psychology, founded on and illustrated by other systems, physiological and physical. I do not presume to follow his awful guidance, but descending to a level more befitting both my capacity and my office, I would attempt briefly to consider, What was the influence, in France, of the Cartesian philosophy, of which such were the first or elementary principles?

Two systems of thought, the most singularly contrasted with each other, presented themselves to Des Cartes, as he looked back on the generations immediately preceding his own. The first was the Scholastic philosophy, which, enthralled both by premises and by conclusions which it was forbidden to all

men to controvert, and by a logic from which it was forbidden to any to escape, performed within these impassable limits, feats of mental agility almost as miraculous as they were useless. From this despotism of human authority, some of the great thinkers of Italy, of England, and of France had revolted into a scepticism, which denied or depreciated the power of man to attain to truth at all, either by the use of his reason, or by the aid of revelation. The Reformers themselves had contributed, however undesignedly, to foster this prevailing habit of mind, by subverting many of the established opinions, without being able to agree with each other as to the belief to be substituted for them.

But the noble intellect, and yet more noble spirit, of Des Cartes rejected alike this bondage of human authority, and the lawless anarchy by which it had been succeeded. Loving truth with his whole soul, he sought her by the most rugged and untrodden paths. He accepted, indeed, the doubts of Montaigne and Charron, of Gassendi, and of Hobbes. But, in the judgment of his most eminent disciples, the unbelief, which with them was final, with him was provisional. To them it was a resting-place, to him a point of departure. He became a voluntary unbeliever only that he might attain to a settled faith; and divested himself of every preconceived thought, that so he might erect that superstructure of his more mature judgment, on the single basis which appeared to him unassailable by any just or even plausible objection. When addressing you on the subject of the "provisional doubts" of Abélard, I offered my opinion on the substantial worth and accuracy of such eulogies as these; and I now add, that the scepticism of Des Cartes, however upright, did not

conduct him to the truth he sought. The system which he thus built up by the intense and solitary labours of more than twenty years, has long since been numbered among the things that were, and are not. It was not given to him to be the intellectual legislator of succeeding ages. But he achieved the yet higher glory of transmitting to all the generations which have followed his own, the indelible impress of his freedom of thought, of his reverence for truth, and of his fervent zeal for the propagation of it.

The earliest of the triumphs of Des Cartes are, however, rather amusing than serious, and are curiously characteristic of French society. The austere sage, or rather his books and his doctrines, became for a time eminently fashionable in Paris. Thus we find Madame de Sevigné persuading herself that the nieces of so great a man must excel all other ladies in a certain dance, which, in those days, all ladies were performing. Her inimitable letters bear frequent testimony to the popular use of Cartesian phraseology, as when she writes to her daughter, "J'aimerois fort à vous parler sur certains chapitres; mais ce plaisir n'est pas à portée d'être espéré. En attendant, je pense, donc je suis; je pense à vous avec tendresse, donc je vous aime; je pense à vous uniquement de cette manière, donc je vous aime uniquement." The Fables of La Fontaine also illustrate the prevailing admiration, or, it might rather be said, the submissive worship, of the great teacher, whom he declares the Pagans would have adored as a god, and to whom (he adds) even we may assign a place midway between those beings who are merely human and those who are wholly spiritual. Fénélon reproduced the principles of Des Cartes with all the

embellishments of his own graceful imagination; and Bossuet himself in his treatise, "De la Connaissance de Dieu et de Soi-même," is supposed to be nothing more than the interpreter of some of the more considerable tenets of the Cartesian philosophy.

To explain the decrees of a power so capricious and arbitrary as fashion, is a task which may be undertaken by none but those who have been initiated into her higher mysteries. It may, however, be conjectured, that the patrons of that kind of celebrity found a peculiar zest in bestowing it on one who stood so far aloof from their own glittering circle. Probably, also, they discovered in his style, a charm which the most enthusiastic might feel, however little they might be able to analyse it. For the language of Des Cartes resembles nothing more than the atmosphere, by the intervention of which we see, though it is itself invisible. It is the nearest possible approach to that inarticulate speech, in which disembodied spirits may be supposed to interchange their thoughts. It has no technical terms—no appeals to the memory—no colouring of imagination or of wit, —no trope, or epigram, or antithesis—no rhetoric and no passion. And yet it wants neither warmth nor elegance. The warmth is perceptible in his evident and devout solicitude to attain to truth and to impart it. He writes not to exhibit his own powers, but to benefit his readers. In the words (I believe) of Pascal, "As you study the author you perceive the man." The elegance consists in the felicity and the ease with which each successive word, and sentence, and paragraph, and discussion falls into its proper place, and exactly fulfils its appropriate office. It is a language which may be compared to a perfect system of musical chords, which being touched by some abso-

lute master of the science of harmony, yields a strain at once the most complex in reality, and the most simple in appearance. La Place himself never writes under the restraint of a more severe logic. La Fontaine never tells a fable with a more perspicuous simplicity. "Les Précieuses Ridicules" of Molière, therefore, read and extolled Des Cartes in the sincere belief that they understood him. It was the most natural, though the most complete, of all mistakes. If our own Butler could have borrowed his pen, the superficial many would have been as much fascinated by the Analogy as they were by the "Discours de la Méthode;" and (with all reverence be it added) the penetrating few would have better understood, as they would have still more profoundly revered, that imperishable monument of piety and of wisdom.

But to gratify the taste, and to win the applause of the courtly or literary circles of the age of Louis XIV., was the least of the effects of the labours of Des Cartes. He is the founder in France of that habit of mind, which to this hour characterises her more eminent philosophers, and which they hold up to the admiration of mankind, under the distinguishing term of Spiritualism. On the soundness of these Neo-Platonic doctrines I do not presume to hazard an opinion. But it is risking little to say, that *he* did good service to his country who, by the undying authority of his name, has rescued it from the sensualism of Hobbes. To Des Cartes, more than to any other man, it is owing, that Physiology has never been allowed by the great philosophical teachers of France, or by their disciples, to usurp the province of Psychology, — that the soul is not believed by them to acquire and to digest her aliment, just as the body gathers and assimilates its food, — that they do not

suppose the will, and all the other powers of the interior man, to be but so many parts of a thinking mechanism, obeying the immutable laws of mental dynamics, and destined at last to an inert inactivity, —that they discern in the relations of man to his Creator the still perceptible traces of the Divine image, in which our race was formed, and which, in the depths of its fall and degradation, it still retains,— and that they perceive, even in the economy and structure of the material universe, a wisdom which contemplates and provides for something more than merely material advantages.

Des Cartes is also the founder, among his fellow-countrymen, of "Rationalism," if that word be used in its inoffensive and better sense. Shortly before his birth, the rebound of the human mind from the fetters which had so long repressed its elasticity had been signalised by the appearance, in every part of Europe, of spirits struggling for freedom, and aspiring, as it has been beautifully said, to inhabit the palace of their own thoughts—the *edita, doctrinâ sapientum, templa serena.* But as yet these were but the aspirations of the nobler few. The less noble many were still bowing beneath their ancient servitude. It was in the boyhood of Des Cartes, that Bruno was burnt at Rome, and Vanini tortured at Toulouse. It was in the ripe manhood of Des Cartes, that the reluctant Galileo was compelled to admit the revolution of the sun round the earth. It was soon after Des Cartes had quitted the world, that Malebranche was still bemoaning the despotism which demanded of all men the sacrifice of their reason and their conscience to the Peripatetic faith. Yet in Malebranche, Des Cartes found his most eminent disciple, and in Liebnitz his most illustrious follower. To this hour, the Cartesian

spirit is dominant in Germany, and the "Cogito, ergo sum," is the real basis of the hazardous speculations of her greatest philosophers.

For that spirit yet lives, though the forms to which it once gave life are for ever gone. It lives in those mental habits, so familiar to our own times, that we have almost forgotten that they are new, and have ceased to look back to their origin amongst us. Such is the habitual assertion of the right to discriminate between truth and falsehood, in opposition to any and to every human authority. Such is, also, the habit of bringing all such questions to the test of the universal, not of individual, reason. Such, again, is the rejection, in our speculative inquiries, of the treacherous aid of a philosophical terminology, and the rejection of the yet more dangerous support of great names, of ancient traditions, and of established maxims. And such, above all the rest, is the habit of regarding the search for truth, and the propagation of truth, as the high duties to which the intellectual rulers of mankind are bound, when necessary, to sacrifice, not their ease merely, but fame itself, and every other recompense which the world could offer. Francis Bacon was not more the founder of such rationalism as this in England, than Réné Des Cartes was the founder of it in France.

Nor was he content to vindicate the rights of reason. He laboured, also, to determine and enforce her obligations. In Des Cartes, the characteristic logic of the French understanding attained its perfection, as, in his writings, it found its model. A teacher of dialectics might draw from every page of the "Discours de la Méthode," admirable examples of the right use of that science. So admirable, indeed,

were they that, while Arnauld and Nicole followed their guidance in the "Grammaire générale Raisonnée," and in the "Logique" of Port Royal, the dramatists, and wits, and poets, as they laboured in the adjacent château of Versailles to amuse their royal patron, rendered an involuntary homage to their literary sovereign. They imitated the severe sequence of his argumentation, even when it was their immediate object to provoke a smile; and they aimed at his transcendental truths, while giving utterance to the anguish or the raptures of the heart.

The French critics, pledged as they are to discover the absolute perfection of dramatic genius in Corneille, Racine, and Molière—the consummation of wit and taste in Boileau—and the last refinement of graceful playfulness in La Fontaine—maintain, that the secret of the unrivalled beauty of them all consists in the sagacity with which they grasp universal truths, and in the precision with which they express them; or, in other words, in the Cartesian spirit by which they are animated. I know not how to concur in this eulogy. I can perceive, indeed, in the poetry of the age of Louis XIV., this boasted power of reasoning; but I think that I, also, perceive that it is attained at the expense of the higher power of thinking. We have learnt, from our own poets and dramatists, to regard a yet more exalted office than this as their appropriate ministry. We require them to invent and to imagine—to detect the mysteries of the heart—to kindle and to control the affections—and to render the beautiful and the sublime, the pathetic and the ludicrous, suggestive of truth sometimes familiar, and sometimes recondite. The Cartesian philosophy, and the logical exactness of their French rivals, is like a cold subsoil, stunting and starving the vegetation of the well cul-

tured surface. Thus their heroines not seldom pause to deliver a subtle analysis of the passions by which we are to suppose them devoured. Thus, also, the most brilliant of their comic personages give utterance to long epigrammatic lectures, in the tone (not I fear of all tones the most captivating) which best befits an academical prælection. The French *dramatis persona* is not an individual agent, behaving and talking as his own peculiar nature prompts him. He is but one of the various aspects of the dramatic author himself— one of the many vehicles for his emotions, for his wisdom, or for his wit. When we read Henry IV., we think only of Falstaff; when we read Andromache, we think only of Racine. Hence it is that neither in the familiar conversation of the French people, nor in their popular literature, do we often meet with the references (so incessant amongst ourselves) to the fictitious characters of the national stage, as though they were so many veritable men and women, the intimate acquaintance of us all. For not only the kings and sages, but the lacqueys and chambermaids, of the classical French theatre are all graduates of the Cartesian academy,— reasoners from whom, indeed, you learn no fallacies, but associates from whom you catch no inspiration. Our own national and invincible predilections will constrain us all to look with infinitely greater pleasure upon the forest glade, over which the oak freely tosses his giant arms into the air, than upon all the gardens ever laid out by Le Notre, and on all the rectilineal avenues with which he has adorned them.

But Des Cartes had yet other pupils than these, whose genius shed a glory around the age, though not around the court, of Louis XIV. In his correspondence is to be seen a letter from M. Marsenne,

dated in November, 1639, referring to a youth of sixteen years of age, who had just finished a treatise on the conic sections, and who promised to rival the most illustrious mathematicians. The intelligence seems scarcely to have attracted the notice of the great philosopher, who however, after an interval of eight years, met this precocious genius, and conversed with him on the existence of a vacuum, on the weight of the atmosphere, and on the reality of that subtle matter which was then imagined to fill the illimitable regions of space. At the time of this interview Blaise Pascal, for that was the young man's name, was labouring under an access of the malady which accompanied him from the cradle to the grave, and Des Cartes (an amateur physician) was among the number of those who in vain suggested remedies for his relief. Feeble as was the bodily frame of Pascal, the few years which he passed in intercourse with the world were vehemently agitated by some of the most intense of the worldly passions. The years which intervened between his retirement to Port Royal des Champs and his death, were devoted to a preparation for that great change,—a preparation which consisted in the devout communing of his soul with God, and in preparing, for the benefit of mankind, that great work, of which the scattered fragments, under the name of Pascal's Thoughts, are in the hearts of many, and in the hands of all.

And yet not more than seven years have elapsed since the world was first placed in possession of a genuine collection of them. The earliest edition had been rendered at once imperfect by the omissions, and redundant by the additions, to which the author's manuscripts had been subjected by the jealous piety of his surviving associates at Port Royal. The ex-

istence of some such errors was generally known, but the extent of them was unsuspected, until M. Cousin surprised the world by the publication of many of the suppressed passages, in which Pascal appeared to avow a Pyrrhonism still more complete than that which he had himself condemned in Montaigne. To verify or to correct this discovery, M. Faugère entered upon a diligent examination of every document throwing any light on it, which could be found in the national or in the private archives of France. The result of this labour of love was the appearance of a new edition of the "Pensées," to which it seems scarcely possible that any thing material should be added by any future inquirer. A careful collection and collocation of the scattered leaves of the original manuscripts has enabled M. Faugère to show, that the passages which had attracted M. Cousin's notice were, in reality, fragments of which the sense had been entirely changed by their accidental separation from their context, or from each other. In what manner this has been proved,—what new views M. Faugère has been able to disclose of Pascal's character and doctrines,—and what that character and what those doctrines really were—may be best learned from one of that series of Essays which, having been first given to the world anonymously, have recently been collected and published as his own, by Mr. Rogers, one of the very few writers of our age and country who could, without presumption, have undertaken to fathom the learning, and to appreciate the genius, of Blaise Pascal. It is a presumption of which I shall not myself be guilty. It will be my humbler office to inquire, what is the place occupied by that great man in the literary history of his native land?

Pascal, then, was a Cartesian. Like Des Cartes,

he began with doubt, in order that he might end in certainty. Like him, he renounced all allegiance to merely human authorities, however exalted, and however venerable. In the spirit of his master, he received what was passing in the microcosm of his own mind, as being, at least to himself, the primary and indispensable witness of truth. As a true disciple of that severe school, he not only revered his own reason as the supreme earthly judge of every question so brought under his cognisance, but conducted all such investigations by the aid of the same geometrical logic by which Des Cartes himself had been guided. And to complete the resemblance between these two great masters of the art and power of investigation, each of them abandoned his privilege of free inquiry, so soon as he entered within the sacred precincts of Faith, where he received, or professed to receive, the authentic intimations of the Divine will, in the spirit of a little child.

But here the similitude ended, and the divergence began. Des Cartes impersonated the "Pure reason," sojourning among men, to occupy herself, not with the business of their lives, but with the mysteries of their nature. Pascal impersonated human sympathy, yearning over the world from which he had withdrawn, and still responding to all the sorrows by which it was agitated. Lofty as was the range of his thoughts, they were never averted from that great human family to which he belonged. Every afflicted member of it had in him a fellow-sufferer. Driven into solitude by the anguish of disappointed hopes and blighted affections, he carried thither also the burden of a body oppressed by almost ceaseless pain or lassitude. And there, living continually, as Richard Baxter says of himself, on the confines of

the church-yard, Pascal learnt, like that holy man, to regard physical science but as at best a manly sport, and metaphysical science as nothing more than a captivating amusement. To learn that even these studies were also vanity, was however the most exquisitely painful of all the lessons he had as yet been taught. It delivered him over to the crushing burden of an existence, cheered by no pursuit, and animated by no interest. Most solemn and pathetic are the words with which he celebrated his deliverance from that fearful void. They were inscribed on a sort of amulet, which, from that time forward to the last hour of his life, he never ceased to carry secretly on his person. "Père juste (he there exclaims), le monde te n'a point connu, mais je t'a connu. Joie, joie, joie, pleurs de joie. Je m'en suis separé! Renonciation totale et douce." He had thus found at last the relief of his own sorrows, but it was in renouncing his attachments to the world, that he might devote his mighty powers to the consolation of others.

Such was the spirit in which Pascal entered on the composition of his immortal "Pensées." Of those reflections, man was the subject; and, even in the absence of any positive testimony, the internal evidence might satisfy any reader of them, that the three men whom he most profoundly studied were, Michel Montaigne, Réné Des Cartes, and Blaise Pascal. Who but the great essayist is the original of his vivid portrait of one made up of vanity and self-contradiction—so light and frivolous, as to be amused with the veriest trifles, even while he is the victim of misery, weakness, and insignificance—at once so little and so great—possessed with an insatiable desire for happiness beyond his reach, and thirsting for truth, to which he is unable to attain?

Who but the great philosopher was the prototype of the exalted being he depicts, as evidently formed for infinity—as immense when contrasted with nothingness—as the great prodigy of nature—as gifted with powers to know and to desire what is good—as great, because he is able to know his own wretchedness—as nobler than the whole material universe, even if it were all united together to overwhelm him, because *it* would be unconscious of its victory, and *he* conscious of his own destruction? And who but Pascal himself was that union of two—the composite man—the chimera—the chaos—the inconsistent and incomprehensible monster, whom his own energetic hand has so powerfully sketched?

It was from his introspection of that composite man that Pascal, like Des Cartes, derived some elementary truths to serve as the basis of a philosophy yet more divine than his. On the basis of his own consciousness he planted the lowest steps of the ladder on which, like that of the Hebrew patriarch, an ascent might, as he hoped, be at last made to the very gates of heaven. From those innate and unassailable ideas, he designed to evolve a series of consequences on which the mighty edifice of revealed truth might securely rest. He proposed to demonstrate the evangelical system by the Cartesian method. He undertook to establish the religion of prophecy and of miracle by the most severe logical induction. He summoned reason to lead the way to those elevated regions of thought, in which she must resign her charge to the guidance of faith and adoration. From a review of the relations and analogies between the nature of man and the revelation of God, was to be wrought out a chain of internal evidences, linking indissolubly together those primary verities which

our consciousness attests, and those ultimate verities which Christianity discloses.

In these later times the Church has sustained no greater disappointment than in that premature death which intercepted the completion of Pascal's undertaking. The fragments of it lie scattered before us, and no meaner hand than his may presume to reconstruct and finish them. Yet, even in their unfinished state, they constitute the most effectual, perhaps, of all the succours by which uninspired man has relieved the human mind from the heavy burden of religious scepticism.

And yet it is but too evident that the great teacher himself fainted occasionally beneath that burden throughout the whole of his mortal existence. M. Cousin's discoveries have, indeed, been superseded by the yet more recent discoveries of M. Faugère. But enough remains to show that Pascal paid the usual penalties of genius, and that not even he could ascend heights of such surpassing elevation, without perceiving that mists and obscurity hung over some parts of the boundless prospects which his mental vision commanded. And hence not, perhaps, the least attractive charm of his profound meditations. What more pathetic than the sadness with which he gazes on the impassable limits of his inquiries, and on the seeming contradictions to which they have conducted him? What more sublime than the resolute integrity with which he scrutinises and rejects the proffered aid of sophisms to enlarge and reconcile his views? What more touching than the meekness with which his fatigued and anxious spirit finds, in the assurances of faith, the repose which he has sought in vain from the most intense and persevering efforts of reason?

Much, however, of the painful unrest which preyed upon the mind of the author of the "Pensées" may, I believe, be ascribed to the necessity under which he lay, of embracing the whole of the tenets of that branch of the Universal Church to which he belonged. The superincumbent mass of her doctrines was continually tending to displace the foundations of his belief, deep and solid as they were. Even the intellect of Pascal was oppressed in the attempt to connect his innate ideas—those elementary evidences of truth which he drew from his own self-consciousness—with such dogmas as those of human merit—of the worship of saints—of ecclesiastical infallibility—and of the transubstantiation of the elements. Yet, until that connection had been so firmly established, his heart might not find, in the communion of papal Rome, the tranquillity and the solace of which it stood in need; and he never sought it in any other Christian fellowship than theirs.

Sometimes, indeed, he found relief from sceptical thoughts by diverting his mind to topics of a less overwhelming interest. Some years before his retirement, the Jesuits had accused him of a disingenuous plagiarism from the Italians, on the subject of the weight of the atmosphere; and it is said that his father repelled the imputation by the prophetical menace, that a day would come when the youth whom they had injured would inflict on themselves an eternal shame and penitence. The utterance of this prediction is, however, doubtful; but we know from the authority of his sister, Madame Perrier, that he undertook the Provincial Letters at the request of Arnauld, who had not himself succeeded in successfully refuting the condemnation which, at the

instance of the Jesuits, had been launched against him by the Sorbonne. And keen, indeed, were the shafts of the champion of Port Royal, and irremediable their wounds. Although, at the present day, few perhaps, if any, feel an interest in the controversy on its own account; yet I cannot but avow my own opinion that, in that controversy, much less than justice is rendered by Pascal to his antagonists. Father Daniel, one of the most learned of them, has written an answer which no one, I think, can read without conceiving some distrust of the accuracy of the great censor, both as a logician and as a narrator of matters of fact. But both Daniel and Pascal leave unnoticed what I apprehend to be the true answer to a large part of the argument, or rather of the invective, of the Provincial Letters. It is, that whoever will undertake to prescribe a system of morals in which every principle of virtue shall be brought to the test of extreme cases, and shall be accommodated to them, will, ere long, find himself in a region of hypothesis, in which darkness must be often put for light, and light for darkness. But thus to control and guide the conscience by peremptory rules, embracing every conceivable problem of human conduct, was not peculiar to the Jesuits. Such casuistry was part of the religious system of the Jansenists also; and, indeed, of every other section of the Church of Rome. It formed the code to be administered in the judgment seat of the confessional. Pascal and Daniel might each have silenced the other by the remark, or by the acknowledgment, that their common spiritual mother was really responsible for the extravagancies of Escobar and Sanchez, because she required all her children to live under the law of virtue considered

as an abstract science, rather than under the law of virtue considered as a sentiment spontaneously arising in the regenerate heart.

But the reader of the Provincial Letters can hardly pause to form any such cold censure. It seems to him impossible, that a weapon of such exquisite edge and temper should be wielded by any other arm than that of truth herself. He cannot believe that a fiction so simple, and yet so admirably adapted to its purpose, as the imaginary dialogue of the first ten letters, should be really affording concealment to any error. He rejects as incredible the supposition, that any darkness (conscious or unconscious) should really be overclouding a mind which can infuse a light so pellucid into that metaphysical chaos, and can animate with so much life and warmth the dry bones of so obscure a controversy. And while Pascal exercises this kind of spell over the understanding of his readers, he holds their imagination also in equal bondage. His first ten letters are a kind of comedy, glowing with all the illusions, the irony, the gaiety, and the wit of the French theatre in the age of Louis XIV. Then, however, the scene is shifted. The well-meaning but bewildered interpreter of the Jesuitical casuists and his Socratic interrogator are dismissed from the stage, and the Port Royalist appears in his own person to pronounce an indignant invective on the extravagant and atrocious opinions into which his too candid interlocutor has been beguiled. It is an invective as withering as ever proceeded from the French pulpit, when ringing with the vehement eloquence of Bossuet, or the inexorable logic of Bourdaloue.

I have said that I aim at nothing more than to ascertain the place properly belonging to Pascal in

the literary history of his native land. It is a position unlike that of any of his illustrious competitors. With each of them literature was the great business and object of life. With Pascal it may be said to have been rather at one time a recreation, at another a self-sacrifice—a recreation or a self-sacrifice of an intellectual giant. He played with physical and mathematical science, and abandoned it as a pastime unworthy the heir of an immortal existence. He played with theological controversy, and turned aside from it also as a pursuit below the dignity of his sacred vocation. He did not *play*, indeed, with the task of demonstrating the truths of Christianity, but he undertook it in a spirit of compassionate sympathy for his brethren of mankind, with which no desire for their applause, nor any other secular motive, was allowed to mingle. Into these relaxations, and into these tasks, the whole soul of the author was unreservedly thrown; and in each of them in turn he exhibits some new aspect of that sublime and comprehensive spirit. Except from these genuine and undesigned self-disclosures, it would have been scarcely credible, that, in the same mind, could have met in perfect harmony, the reasoning powers of a great mathematician and the imagination of a great poet—the genial warm-heartedness of a philanthropist and the malicious wit of a comedian — the condensed energy of an orator and the profound and conscientious deliberations of a philosopher; or that the canvass on which he wrought out these prodigies of genius should be ever glowing with the well-ordered contrasts, the graceful variety, and the rich colouring of a painter of human life and manners.

Pascal, however, in common with all his illustrious contemporaries, was deficient in one of the moral

sciences. I refer to that science which investigates the principles of all social institutions, the causes and tendencies of historical events, and the rights and duties of man as a member of the commonwealth. While every other field of knowledge was cultivated in France, Political Philosophy alone was neglected. In other lands, by the aid of such studies, the mental had triumphed over the physical power; but there mind, though victorious in every other enterprise, was powerless to secure to society the blessings of a wise, just, and impartial government. What were the real causes of this ill success? or, in other words, to revert to the problem with a view to which I have engaged in this slight and hasty retrospect of French literature, What was its effect on the constitution of the civil government of France? The answer to that question must at least touch on the political influence—of the School of the Pyrrhonists, or the successors of Abélard—of the School of the Ideologists, or the successors of Bernard—and of the School of the Ergoists, or the successors of Calvin. The means by which the kings of France first compelled the great authors of their country to abandon their high office of explaining and improving the polity of the state, and then reduced them to the degraded rank of sycophants or idolaters of the royal power, are the fit subjects of a distinct consideration.

First, then, the Pyrrhonic School, or succession of the men of letters of France, may be deduced from Abélard as its patriarch, through Rabelais, Montaigne, Des Cartes, and Pascal, and many intervening but more obscure writers, till it reaches Bayle, Montesquieu, Voltaire, and the other contributors to the Encyclopédie of the 18th century. It was the common design of them all, though that design was

not avowed by them all with equal frankness, to embark on the voyage for the discovery of truth from "provisional doubt," as their common point of departure; that is, from a total absence of all positive opinions whatever. I stated on a former occasion, why I believe every such attempt to proceed on a misconception of the fundamental laws of our moral nature, and of the immutable condition of human life. I am well convinced, despite the examples of Abélard, of Des Cartes, and of Pascal, that he who, rebelling against those laws, and impatient of that condition, shall really commence his search for truth in a state of provisional doubt about all things, will end in a state of incurable doubt upon every question. Whoever forces his mind into the habit of collecting from every quarter, and of presenting vividly to his imagination, all the difficulties to which every doctrine, religious, moral, or political, is more or less obnoxious; and who, then, makes such difficulties the subjects of his protracted study, is inevitably, though unconsciously, disqualifying himself for the clear discernment, or for the cordial acceptance of any doctrines whatever. Progressively abandoning his faith in every thing else, he at length abandons all faith in himself, and acquiesces in the melancholy hypothesis, that the primæval cause of his existence (whatever that unknown cause may be) called him into being (if indeed his existence be real), with this eager craving for knowledge, that it might conduct him, not to light, but to darkness; not to the discovery of the order and symmetry of all things, but to a view of all things warring with each other in wild and chaotic confusion. Commencing with universal doubt, he will end with universal scepticism.

By scepticism, as I at present employ that word, I

do not mean the suspension of the judgment on each successive subject of inquiry, nor that freedom of mind which, in the result of any such inquiry, can lay aside the most cherished preconceptions, and embrace truth, even if she at length presents herself in a form the most unexpected and unwelcome. Without such scepticism as this, the search for truth is but a mockery; and the inquirer, however much he may vaunt his freedom, is, in fact, a bondsman. The scepticism which I impute to so many of the great French writers, is a very different state of mind from this. They were opinionless, and were content to be so. They were destitute of settled convictions, and acquiesced in the want of them. Even so far as they could attain to any definite creed, they held by it faintly and irresolutely. They had no faith which they were ready to attest by any considerable sacrifice; none to which they clung as an indestructible part of their portion in this life, or of their inheritance beyond the grave.

If, as I am constrained to infer, Abélard, and Rabelais, and Montaigne, and Bayle, and so many others of their illustrious lineage in France, were in this sense of the word sceptics, it seems to me to follow inevitably, that a large part of their readers were sceptics also. For they became illustrious, precisely because they were the faithful interpreters of the thoughts and feelings which had already been born, or were struggling into life, in the minds of their contemporaries. Their popular acceptance and their fame were earned by that fidelity. They would have inculcated Pyrrhonism in vain, and would have been unrewarded by the laurel in any land, of which the prevailing tendencies were not already Pyrrhonic. They gave to those tendencies a strength and a de-

cision, which would have been unattainable without their aid; but though they fostered, they did not create, them.

That scepticism has long been among the natural characteristics of Frenchmen, I infer, not merely from the general tone of so much of their literature, but also from that peculiarity of it which French critics make their boast. It bears, as they very truly say, constant witness to the national passion for abstract ideas. That passion, indeed, animates not their books only, but their discourses in the senate, in the pulpit, and at the bar. It takes possession of their clubs, and even of their private society. No aspirant after wit or wisdom in France can make good his pretensions, unless he knows how to scale the transcendental peaks of philosophy. To this species of the sublime, they are ever ready to sacrifice even the beautiful. The fine mental sense of Greece (where the love of beauty was a national and universal instinct) would have rejected, with unutterable scorn, those supersensuous embellishments with which Frenchmen, especially in our own times, rejoice to adorn their poetry, their history, and their rhetoric. For, in truth, such ornaments are as cheap and vulgar as they are unbecoming. Any man of common intelligence may be easily trained to any legerdemain of the understanding—to the making of abstractions, for example, as easily as to the making of jokes, or the making of verses. The production of apophthegms is a hard task to him, and to him only, who allows himself to utter no words, without both a definite meaning and a profound conviction of the truth of what he says. The throes and labours of a long life preceded the birth of each of the sayings for which as many of the sages of Greece have been immortalised. But the

writer of the newspaper which lies on your breakfast table at Paris, is never without his pearls of superlative wisdom to scatter over his account of yesterday's review or opera.

Whence then is this national habit of quitting the solid earth for the hazy clouds? It is nothing else than the love of that "provisional doubt" in which these aeronauts find their pleasure and their glory. By the aid of these metaphysical juggleries of words, they sublimate, darken, and dissolve all doctrines, even without the express and formal contradiction of any. They live in a region of half meanings, or of no meaning,—in a state of contented, though perhaps unconscious, scepticism. Wedded to no political opinions, but, dallying with all, they pass, in a few brief years, through all the phases in which political society has ever exhibited itself amongst men, though never lacking "pure ideas" with which to polish periods, and to darken counsel, about each.

The France of the last sixty years has, indeed, been in a state of chronic and unnatural distortion. But her intellectual habits were not, and could not have been, essentially different when the hill and gardens of Ste. Geneviève were thronged with the disciples of Abélard, or when the booksellers' shops were besieged by purchasers of the Gargantua, or when the ladies of Versailles were writing Cartesian letters. The enthusiastic popularity of their sceptical teachers has, from age to age, been at once the effect and the cause of that state of the national mind, of which we may read the results in every page of their national history. That history every where depicts a people gallant, gay, ingenious, versatile, and ardent, beyond all rivalry and all example. But it also sets before us a race more destitute than any other of profound and

immutable convictions, and, therefore, less capable than any other of a steady progress in the great practical science of constitutional government,—a people who are, at one time, the sport of any demagogue who can veil his selfish ambition under the cant of "pure ideas;" and, at another time, the victims of any despot who may be strong enough to trample both the ideologists and their verbal science under his feet. To have induced, or cherished, this mental temperament is, I believe, the well-founded reproach of the "Pyrrhonic succession" in France.

The lessons of those who succeeded to, and represented in later times than his own, the mystic Bernard, however opposite to these in their character, were not very dissimilar in their results. I pause at the entrance into a chapter of ecclesiastical history, upon which I am, for many reasons, at once reluctant and incompetent to enter. It belongs not to me, but to others amongst us, to explain what were the religious and philosophical tenets of the Gallican Church, as represented by the Sorbonne, and by the schools of the various religious orders. I believe, however, that many of the most powerful members of those bodies, from the days of Bernard to those of Quesnel, adopted each of the two cardinal articles of the peculiar creed of the Abbot of Clairvaux,—the first, the spiritual discernment, by the regenerate soul, of the mystic characters engraven on it by the very hand of the Creator, in attestation of the whole system of Roman Catholic doctrine,—the second, that, to the pure in heart, all Divine truth is attainable by means of that beatific vision, to which, even in this life, they are admitted; or, in other words, his "Philosophy of Love." To draw up an exact series of the French divines who, by their writings, inculcated, on the

people of France, opinions substantially identical with these, would demand a kind, and a degree, of knowledge to which I have no pretension. But that such opinions are, at this moment, maintained in that country by the Hagiologists, who are labouring there so zealously for the advancement of the interests of the See of Rome, is a fact familiar to all who are conversant with their books; and from those books may also be gathered many curious intimations of the descent of those mysterious dogmas from one generation to another. It may, however, be a sufficient proof of their vitality to observe, that it was in order to repress such speculations, that the Court of Rome pronounced her censure upon Fénélon, and agitated the whole of France by the Bull Unigenitus.

All the argumentative shafts of the Pyrrhonists might have been discharged in vain against such a spiritual coat of mail as this. All the syllogisms which Aristotle ever investigated and constructed would have been unable to disturb any one of the dreams of Madame Guyon. The Stagyrite himself would have been utterly baffled by an antagonist who had so completely shaken off all the fetters of logic. But Rabelais was the most effectual of all auxiliaries to those who had vainly assailed these great outworks of Papal Rome with their impotent dialectics. His hearty laugh triumphed over antagonists who were altogether beyond the reach of argument. But no alliance could be more disastrous even to those who invoked it. He was the intellectual progenitor of Voltaire. He was the first of that long line of mockers and gibers who hold a position so prominent and so unfortunate in the literary history of France. In no other land has such perfection been ever attained, in the art of drawing merriment from the most serious

subjects which can engage the thoughts of man. Now there is no mental habit so unfriendly to the growth of firm convictions, and to stability of purpose, amongst those who addict themselves to it. In his own appropriate province Momus is well enough; but when he wanders from it into the regions sacred to our highest interests, temporal and eternal, he brings with him a moral malaria.

As Mysticism and Quietism were impenetrable weapons of defence against all argument, so they were very formidable weapons of assault against all imputed heresies. I pointed out, in a former lecture, the intimacy of the relation which they bore to the persecutions of the court of Rome. They assured the persecutor of his own absolute infallibility. They taught him that dissent from his opinions was nothing less than fatal. They appeared to him to convict the heretic, not of a mere error of judgment, but of an obdurate depravity of will. They supplied all the premises of which the stake was the actual, if not, indeed, the legitimate, consequence. Many have been the enemies of the peace of mankind, but none so ruthless as the Ideologists. Many are the thoughts which have steeled the heart of man to mercy, but none so effectually as a "pure idea" in full possession of it. The rapacity of De Montfort might have been satiated with the plunder and conquest of the Albigenses. The gloomy purpose of the souls of Innocent III. and his successors demanded their extermination. Catherine of Medici and the House of Guise might have been satisfied to reign over heretical subjects, if they could have been terrified into silence and submission. Philip II. and Gregory XIII. were haunted by a dark spirit, which required that the whole realm of France should be

watered with the blood of the Huguenots. Richelieu aimed at nothing more than to crush the political confederacy of La Rochelle. The Confessors of Louis XIV. could be appeased by nothing less than the Dragonnades.

The Mystic and Quietist literature of France was pre-eminently devout, both in its tone and in its design. But it propagated those views to which may be ascribed the massacre of the Albigenses and of the Huguenots. It contributed more powerfully than any other teaching to annihilate, in the minds of men, that modest self-distrust, by which the uplifted arm may be arrested before it falls in vengeance on those who dissent from our opinions. It fostered what I have before called the pride of belief—the pride of him who, believing that his own soul is a mirror reflecting the eternal verities of the Divine intellect, considers it impious to doubt his own infallibility. The stories of the Albigensian crusade and of the wars of religion are, indeed, so revolting, that the reader of them is reconciled to his own nature only by the remembrance that crimes so unparalleled had their basis rather in the illusions of the human heart than in its malignity. Those crimes, however, have not been without their penalties. The royal exterminators of the heretics were elevated by their destruction to an absolute and despotic power over every class and variety of their subjects. Those literary teachers, whose mysticism scattered the too prolific seeds of those persecutions, were therefore, in effect, the most fatal of all enemies to the growth of constitutional liberty in France.

Nor is it possible to exempt the great author of the Institution Chrétienne, and the "Ergoists," who acknowledged in him their intellectual proge-

nitor, from their share of the responsibility for the failure of sound principles of government amongst the French people. His book furnished the premises of which his Presbyterian scheme of Church government in France was the practical consequence. As we formerly saw, it was a polity founded on principles as purely democratic, as were proclaimed in the States General, either by Marcel or by Mirabeau. Calvin was one of the "grands organisateurs" of France; and, in common with almost the whole of that class of French statesmen, he placed himself much more under the guidance of logic than of those other habits, or powers of the human mind to which less ambitious statesmen render not indeed an exclusive, but a willing, homage. He reasoned with inexorable precision, and as he reasoned so he acted. To compare things utterly dissimilar in every other respect, his Institution Chrétienne, and the Ecclesiastical Economy to which it gave birth, tallied with the revolutionary declaration of the "rights of man," and the constitutional act which followed it. In either case the logic was invulnerable, and in each the scheme was impracticable. In either case the design was to advance the cause of freedom, and in each the result was to render that cause utterly hopeless.

In his study at Geneva, Calvin seems to have forgotten the real condition of the people, and of the government of his native land. Perhaps he believed that his disciples would be strong enough to obtain the mastery of that government. If so, it was an entire and a fatal mistake. He established an ecclesiastical democracy in a land in which political freedom had not so much as a nominal existence, and in which the vast majority were the willing subjects of a spiritual despotism. No man could reason more

closely, and no man could divine the future more unskilfully. No vision of such a monarch as Richelieu presented itself to his foresight. He did not foresee that, by asserting the independence of the Presbyterian Church, he was raising up against it a mortal enemy in the first great statesman, who might be strong enough to assert the supremacy of the Crown over all the other institutions of France. He fell into the error so habitual to almost all French Reformers, of sacrificing the practical to the theoretical, and of squandering all which might have been secured, in the vain hope of at once grasping every thing which could be desired. I, therefore, place him and his followers amongst those whose writings contributed to the growth of absolute power in France—because he, and they in obedience to his lesson, presented to the French kings, and especially [redacted] the greatest of them all, an antagonist [redacted]ce provoked and justified their hostility [redacted]ecause he and they enlisted the honest national se[redacted]ments of their fellow-countrymen, against a system [redacted]regnant with the seeds of national disunion—because he and they inculcated religious freedom in a strain so lofty and uncompromising, as to render it barren of political freedom, its natural and legitimate offspring.

It remains for me to indicate (most briefly of course) the means by which the kings of France compelled the great authors of their country to abandon their high and appropriate office, of explaining and improving the polity of the state.

During one hundred and forty years the unjust ambition of England had inflicted on that country all the calamities of foreign and of civil war. That crime was expiated by our forefathers in the long and sanguinary contest between the Houses of York and Lancaster.

But scarcely had the French people been rescued from the scourge of foreign invasion, before they in turn inflicted it on their unoffending Italian neighbours. In their lawless thirst for extended dominion, Charles VIII., and his two immediate successors, delivered up the whole of that peninsula to misery and bloodshed. This again was a wanton and an audacious invocation of that retributive Providence which rules over the nations of the earth.

At the revival of learning, an Italian patriot might well have indulged the hope of the growth, in his native land, of the science of government, with all the practical blessings which are the natural fruit of the general diffusion of such knowledge. He might have dwelt on the admirable genius of the people, on their unrivalled academical institutions, on their exclusive possession of many of the treasures of ancient learning, and on the division of the country into several states, at once independent and emulous of each other. He might, indeed, have anticipated a formidable hostility to such pursuits from the various feudal sovereigns of these states, and a yet more dangerous obstacle in the sacerdotal despotism of Rome. But he could hardly have foreseen that a series of new invasions of the Gauls would again crush the rising prospects of Italian independence. They appeared, however, to the south of the Alps, sometimes as the allies, and sometimes as the avowed enemies of the Pope, the Italian Princes, the Spaniards, and the Germans; but always agreeing with them in interdicting those studies which might have taught the prostrate Italian people how their oppressors might be successfully opposed. Crushed beneath the combination of those irresistible forces, the more profound thinkers of Italy extracted out of their own national

degradation a new and ill-omened political science. Machiavelli taught how evil might be called good, and good evil; while Guicciardini, Davila, and Paolo Sarpi assumed in their histories that the rulers of mankind were really guided by these Florentine maxims. We are all familiar with Mr. Macaulay's profound and beautiful analysis of the political morality of that age and country, and with his explanation of the methods by which the homage justly due to integrity and truth was there transferred to successful fraud and well timed treachery. From this demon worship, however, the nobler spirits of Italy turned aside, some, like Galileo and Cassini, to cultivate physical science; some, like Baronius and Muratori, to immerse themselves in antiquarian researches; while many more, following the indestructible bent and genius of their nation, soared away to the regions of creative art, where the follies and the crimes, and, perhaps also the duties, of the lower world were forgotten. In that fairy land they combined the wild imagination of the North with the riant fancies of the East; and there Tasso and Ariosto took refuge from the world of realities in a world of chimeras, where the Paladins of Charlemagne and the story-tellers of Haroun al Raschid meet together, and Christian affections are forced into a strange alliance with the doctrines of Mahomed, and with the magical arts of the fire-worshippers over whom he had triumphed.

But when the French had been driven to the northward of the Alps, the punishment which they had provoked overtook them. The calamities with which they were visited bore an ominous and awful resemblance to those which they had themselves inflicted on the Italian commonwealths. As France had carried the sword, the famine, and the pestilence,

from the one end of the peninsula to the other, so, from the Somme to the Pyrenees, no French province escaped the desolating march of the religious wars. As France had torn from Italy some of her finest territories, so was she compelled to cede to her own foreign enemies her ancient suzerainté over those wealthy regions which now constitute the Belgic kingdom. As she had been allied with the Germans and the Spaniards in the devastation of the Transalpine States, so she had to bewail the ravages of her own by German and Spanish invaders. As her kings had sought the aid of the Medici, in subverting the rights of the neighbouring principalities and republics, so an alliance with a daughter of that house eventually subjugated France, during three successive reigns, to a woman born to be her evil genius and her shame. And as the French invaders of Italy, combining with the Pope, the Imperial and the Spanish crowns, had diverted her men of genius from studies conducing to an enlightened polity and to good government, so Catherine and her sons, in alliance with the Papal Court, the League, and Philip II., banished from France the culture and propagation of a knowledge so unwelcome to her infatuated rulers.

Before the Italian wars, such knowledge had not been altogether neglected there. Joinville, as we have seen, had frankly and impartially exhibited the interior, and Froissart the exterior, aspect of the courts by which, in their times, the world was governed; and De Comines had even been, not only the free interpreter, but the enlightened judge, of the policy of the sovereigns whom he served. But no similar revelations or judgments are to be found in the great French authors who succeeded them. The

contending hosts in the wars of religion were all, indeed, assisted by squadrons of light-armed literary partisans, by whom libels, pamphlets, and pasquinades were discharged in as thick a flight, as the homicidal missiles of the men-at-arms. But I know of no book written by any Frenchman in that age, for the instruction of future ages (except the works of Calvin and of his coadjutors, Farel and Theodore Beza), in which the intellectual rulers of the world, asserting their imprescriptible authority over the secular rulers of it, have summoned them to the bar of their literary tribunal. Calvin, Farel, and Beza, indeed, exercised that dangerous privilege; but it was as exiles from their native land. Rabelais concealed the infrequent and furtive use of it, under the mask and riot of a buffoon. The occasional encroachments of Montaigne beyond the limits permitted to men of letters, were sheltered from punishment, and perhaps from notice, by his careless and unimpassioned optimism, by his seeming indifference about any opinions, and by his sportive dalliance with all. Des Cartes escaped the censorship of the government by occupying himself in researches in which the most jealous autocrat could hardly see any hazard to his own authority; and Pascal enjoyed a precarious safety, by confining himself to the laws of the material universe, and to theological investigations or controversy. Yet even Pascal would have partaken of the penalties of his great coadjutor Arnauld, if the grave had not closed over him before the publication of his Penseés; and if the appearance of the Provincial Letters had not been hailed by the acclamations of a body, of which even Louis XIV. stood in habitual awe—the wits and epigrammatists of Paris.

But it was not enough for the kings of France to

silence all political speculations, unless they also reduced the great authors of their country to the degraded rank of sycophants, or idolaters of the royal power.

Richelieu (himself no inconsiderable author) brought the men of letters of France into bondage to the Court, by creating a sort of literary aristocracy, composed of the members of the French Academy, the honours of which were to be won by the favour of the royal patron. Louis XIV. subjected them to a still more complete dependence. It was a conquest for which nature and fortune had combined to qualify him. He was born if not with great yet with showy and plausible abilities, with a princely spirit, a majestic presence, a mellifluous voice, a figure resplendent with grace and beauty, an exquisite sense of all the proprieties of life, with captivating manners, and an elocution adapting itself to all the emergencies of his high station, and alike felicitous in them all. He reigned in an age when centuries of civil war and of aristocratic ambition had driven the whole people of France to the throne, as their only refuge against their protracted and intolerable sufferings; and before a throne occupied by so magnificent an impersonation of royalty they appeared, not merely as supplicants, but almost as worshippers. Nor was this the impulse of those only who were mean in station or in intellect. In the reign of Louis, king worship was part of the religion of the men of rank, and of genius also. The imaginations of many of them were inflamed by his personal grandeur, and by his splendid achievements. The hearts of some were touched by his affability and his kindness. Without presuming to criticise his measures, they admired in him the living reality of

their ideal of a monarch, and delineated him in all their writings as the great central object, around and in subjection to which were grouped all the other figures with which their invention or their memory could supply them. Fénélon alone, in his character of Mentor to the Duke of Burgundy, ventured to address some counsels on the duty and science of government, nominally to the Telemachus, but really to the Idomeneus, of the court of Versailles; and Fénélon's exile to Cambray may be ascribed as much to his freedom of speech, as to his quietism of soul. The impatience with which, on the one hand, the Grand Monarque regarded the interference of his literary courtiers with his affairs of state, and, on the other hand, their submissive acquiescence in his rebukes, can hardly, indeed, be exaggerated. Witness the fact so strange, and yet so certain, that Racine actually sickened and died, on being censured by his royal idol, for his arrogance in hazarding a suggestion for the prevention and cure of pauperism.

But the constellation of genius, wit, and learning, in the midst of which Louis shone thus pre-eminently, was too brilliant to be obscured by any clouds of royal disfavour; nor would any man have shrunken with greater abhorrence than himself, from any attempt to extinguish or to eclipse their splendour. He wisely felt, and frankly acknowledged, that their glory was essential to his own; and he invited, to a seat at his table, Molière the roturier, to whom the lowest of his nobles would have appointed a place among his menial servants. As Francis, and Charles, and Leo, and Julius, and Lorenzo had assigned science, and poetry, and painting, and architecture, and sculpture, as their appropriate provinces, to those great master spirits of Italy, to whom they forbade the culture of political

philosophy, so Louis, when he interdicted to the gigantic intellects of his times and country all intervention in the affairs of the commonwealth, summoned them to the conquest of all the other realms of thought in which they might acquire renown, either for him, for France, or for themselves. The theatres, the academies, the pulpits, and the monasteries of his kingdom rivalled each other in their zealous obedience to that royal command, and obeyed it with a success from which no competent and equitable judge can withhold his highest admiration. At this day, when all the illusions of the name of Louis are exhausted, and in this country, where his Augustan age has seldom been regarded with much enthusiasm, who can seriously address himself to the perusal of his great tragedians, Corneille and Racine—or of his great comedians, Molière and Régnard—or of his great poets, Boileau and La Fontaine—or of his great wits, La Rochefaucauld and La Bruyêre—or of his great philosophers, Des Cartes and Pascal—or of his great divines, Bossuet and Arnauld—or of his great scholars, Mabillon and Montfaucon—or of his great preachers, Bourdaloue and Massillon—and not confess that no other monarch was ever surrounded by an assemblage of men of genius so admirable for the extent, the variety, and the perfection of their powers.

And yet the fact that such an assemblage were clustered into a group, of which so great a king was the centre, implies that there must have been some characteristic quality uniting them all to each other and to him, and distinguishing them all from the nobles of every other literary commonwealth which has existed amongst men. What, then, was that quality, and what its influence upon them?

Louis lived with his courtiers, not as a despot

among his slaves, but as the most accomplished of gentlemen among his associates. This social equality was, however, always guarded from abuse by the most punctilious observance, on their side, of the reverence due to his pre-eminent rank. In that enchanted circle men appeared at least to obey, not from a hard necessity, but from a willing heart. The bondage in which they really lived was ennobled by that conventional code of honour which dictated and enforced it. They prostrated themselves before their fellow-man with no sense of self-abasement, and the chivalrous homage with which they gratified him, was considered as imparting dignity to themselves.

Louis acknowledged and repaid this tribute of courtesy, by a condescension still more refined, and by attentions yet more delicate than their own. The harshness of power was so ingeniously veiled, every shade of approbation was so nicely marked, and every gradation of favour so finely discriminated, that the tact of good society—that acquired sense, which reveals to us the impression we make on those with whom we associate—became the indispensable condition of existence at Versailles and Marly. The inmates of those palaces lived under a law peculiar to themselves; a law most effective for its purposes, though the recompense it awarded to those who pleased their common master was but his smile, and though the penalty it imposed on those who displeased him was but his frown.

The men of letters, to whom a place was assigned in the court of Louis, were nearly all plebeians, but were rescued by the king from the social degradations to which their rank might otherwise have exposed them. The graces and the elegance which they witnessed in his circle, were not only adopted in their

own personal address and manners, but were transferred into their writings. To please, and to rise by pleasing, became the great ends of literary, as they were of fashionable, existence. Men of genius sought to please in the republic of letters, as they had learned to please among the aristocratic companions of their princes. They ascended to literary power by the arts which, in that age, conducted the nobles of the land to power in the state. They aimed at creating a profound interest by their writings, without ever provoking a painful excitement. Their books were redolent of the same graceful ease, by which they had themselves been charmed in the intercourse of the privileged classes. They exhibited, as authors, the same gaiety of spirit which they had seen diffusing, through that elevated circle, the transient sense of equality, so indispensable to all true social enjoyment. Having learnt, in the brilliant companies which thronged the royal salons, how mighty is the force of ridicule, they assumed, in their literary character, all the weapons, offensive and defensive, by which the assaults of that great aristocratic power may be either pointed or repelled. Diligent students of the conventional code of manners, they became familiar with all the signals beneath which it commands the polished few to rally, and with all the penalties which it denounces against the unpolished many, who are heedless or unconscious of that rallying cry. Minds born to grapple with the loftiest contemplations were thus too often engaged with the most trivial. They were but too apt to study the superficial aspect of society, to the disregard of its inward state and of its outward tendencies. They investigated the specific man more than the generic man, the French character more than the human character, the empty vanities of the world rather than

its true dignities, the fleeting follies of mankind more than their inherent weaknesses or corruptions. Molière himself, great as he was, condescended to become little else than the lord justiciary, under Louis XIV., of the high court of Ridicule.

But while many of the nobler pursuits of literature were thus abandoned, the learned courtiers of Louis found, in their mental and social allegiance to him, the fullest occasion for exercising and perfecting those qualities which, at the commencement of my last lecture, I enumerated as eminently characteristic of the spirit and intellect of the people of France. Their social disposition and genial nature rendered it easy and delightful to them to reflect in their books, the gaiety, the grace, and the cordiality of the high-born associates with whom they mingled. Their logical acumen detected at a glance, and expelled remorselessly from their writings, whatever would have appeared to that fastidious audience, either vulgar, or exaggerated, or tedious, or obscure. They used the most abstruse deductions of reason, as Cleopatra used her pearls, to add an occasional zest to a royal banquet. Their national eloquence shone forth with unwearied lustre, though, even in the pulpit, they never wholly intermitted the homage so habitually rendered to their princely idol. But, above all, the unmeasured obedience of the French people to whatever was esteemed as a legitimate power among them, was manifested by the authors of their Augustan age by the most indiscriminating loyalty. Because Louis was superstitious and intolerant, not a voice was raised among them in defence of spiritual or of mental freedom. Because he was an absolute king, they breathed not a word on behalf of their national franchises. Because he was himself the state, they

passed by the affairs of the commonwealth as though the discussion of them would have been a case of *léze majesté* against him. Because success in war was his favourite boast, they incessantly laboured in erecting trophies to his military renown. Because he was amorous, they sang of love in strains sometimes impassioned, sometimes artificial, but always in harmony with the sentiments which rumour taught them to ascribe to their king. And because he was the admitted model of universal excellence, the greatest minds which France has ever produced, drew habitually and servilely from that model in many of their greatest works.

Genius such as theirs could not, however, but triumph over such obstacles as these. Even under the spells and the bondage of the court of Louis, she made manifest her inherent and indomitable energies. Yet the marks of those shackles are indelibly impressed upon her works. It is for this reason chiefly, that, beyond the limits of France itself, their power is so feebly felt and so coldly acknowledged. Considered as a mere matter of taste, this is, indeed, of little or of no importance. But it is of the deepest moment to mankind that, in the age and country of Louis XIV., literature was faithless to her highest calling, — that her great authors abandoned the free investigation of truth religious, and of truth political,—that the men of the 17th century abdicated that high office to the men of the succeeding age,—and that Racine, Boileau, Molière, Bossuet, and Arnauld abandoned the highest of all the realms of merely human inquiry to the fatal ambition of Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Beaumarchais. Seizing on that deserted province, those great writers assailed the ancient bulwarks of our faith in that Divine power in whom we have our

being, and in those human powers to which God himself has commanded us to be subject. They found those fortresses in France unprotected by any recent defences, and dilapidated by long neglect; and a century has now nearly run its course since the literature of the age of Louis XV. won a disastrous triumph, which might have been averted if the literature of the age of his predecessor had exchanged the debasing service of an idolised man for that service which we are taught to regard, and which we rejoice to accept, as our perfect freedom.

LECTURE XX.

ON THE ABSOLUTE MONARCHY AS ADMINISTERED BY HENRY IV. AND BY RICHELIEU.

I HAVE thus far been engaged in the attempt to explain why neither those causes which subverted the French Feudal Oligarchy, nor those which seemed to promise the establishment of Constitutional Government in that country, were effectual to arrest the growth of the Absolute Monarchy of France. I now proceed to inquire, What was the real character of that Monarchy at the period of its greatest elevation; that is, during the reigns of the first three Princes of the House of Bourbon? If the time which the laws of the University place at my disposal had been sufficient for the purpose, I should have endeavoured to resolve that question, by reviewing the progress of the Bourbon Dynasty under each, in order, of its five great administrators, Sully, Richelieu, Mazarin, Colbert, and Louis XIV. in person. But the pressure of time compels me, for the present, to contract that design,

and to bridge over, as it were, the interval between the wars of religion and the wars of the Fronde, by a rapid survey of the successive stages of the policy of the rulers of France during that period.

It has been said of Henry IV., with equal truth and force, that he was L'Hôpital in arms. The principles which had been asserted by the wisdom and the eloquence of the great chancellor became triumphant by the foresight and the conquests of the great king. In an age of wild disorder and overwhelming calamity, he was raised up to restore his kingdom to affluence and to peace. He appeared to rescue his Protestant subjects from the tyranny which had so long denied to them the freedom of conscience. He came to give a firm basis to the national policy, and to open to his people at large a new direction, and a wider scope, for the martial energies by which they had hitherto been at once so highly, and so ineffectually, distinguished. For these high offices he was qualified by great talents, and by many virtues. With a capacity large enough to embrace all the social, military, and political interests of his dominions, he combined that practical good sense and flexibility of address, without which there is no safe descent from the higher regions of thought to the real business of life. The intuitive promptitude, and the enduring stability, of his resolutions attested at once his large experience in affairs, and his wide survey both of the resources at his command, and of the contingencies to which he was exposed. He possessed that kind of mental instinct which advances by the shortest path to what is at once useful and possible, and which turns aside, with unhesitating decision, from any illusive and impracticable scheme. Never was a great innovator more characterised by practical wisdom;

and never did such wisdom assume a more attractive aspect. His manners exhibited all the graces of his native land in their most captivating form. Delighted with his bonhommie, his gaiety, and his frankness, his subjects not only forgave his vices, but even found in them a fascination the more. They smiled at the scandalous amours of their gallant monarch as a not unbecoming tribute paid by human greatness to human infirmity. If they looked with awe on the desperate valour of his enterprises, on the inflexible rigour of his discipline, or on the soaring ambition of his political designs, they were reconciled to the stern character of the prince by the ever-flowing and genuine sensibilities of the man. If his lofty sense of his personal and ancestral dignity sometimes gave an austere aspect to his intercourse with his people, that pride of birth did but enhance the charm of his quick sympathy with the feelings and interests of the meanest of them. And, above all the rest, every Frenchman loved and admired, in Henry, the lover and admirer of France; and became patriotically blind to the faults of his renegade, and debauched, but still patriot, king.

And even now, when the spell is broken, and we may look back on the life of Henry IV. with judicial impartiality, and reprobate the apologies which would have elevated his crimes into virtues, we cannot conceal from ourselves the fact, that he conferred on his people benefits which well entitled him to their lasting gratitude.

For, first, Henry of Navarre was the founder of religious toleration in France. Until the Edict of Nantes there had been many truces, but no real peace, between the adherents of Rome and the

followers of Calvin. To compel all the fragments of the Christian Church to coalesce into one body, each member of which should hold the same opinions, and worship under the same forms, had been the inflexible policy of all his predecessors. To acquiesce in their separation, and yet to maintain each section in the nearest possible approach to an equality both of civil and religious privileges, was the no less inflexible design of Henry. His charter could not, indeed, restore unity to the Church, but it established, on what seemed a secure basis, the unity of the State. The two religions were thenceforward placed under ecclesiastical laws widely differing from each other, but under a civil law common to them both.

The second great praise of the first of the Bourbon line is that of having rescued France from the abyss of bankruptcy and financial ruin in which it had been involved by the improvidence of the House of Valois. For the completion of that great work the larger share of honour is, indeed, due to Sully; and I will not pause to repeat what I have already had occasion to offer on the subject of his fiscal administration. But from his own Economies Royales we sufficiently learn that, unaided by the magnanimity, the self-denial, and the affection of the king, not even the zeal, the courage, and the sagacity of the great minister would have accomplished that Herculean labour.

The third title of Henry to the place which he has ever held among the benefactors of France, has at all times been acknowledged by Frenchmen with more enthusiasm than any other of his services. He was the first of her kings who had at once the discernment to perceive how high a station belonged to her in the European commonwealth, and the energy to devise

the methods by which that rank might be effectually vindicated. The project of a great Christian republic, at the head of which the eldest son of the Church was to take his stand, was, it is true, but an amusement for the imaginations of Henry and of Sully. Yet, like other dreams, it had a basis in waking realities. Richelieu, Louis XIV., and Napoleon were but, each in his turn, the practical interpreters of the vision with which the readers of the Economies Royales are familiar. It contemplated the substitution of the French, for the Austrian, preponderance in Europe. It anticipated the great principle of that equilibrium of national forces which, half a century later, formed the basis of the Treaty of Westphalia. It was one of those prolific ideas which, when conceived by genius, matured by experience, and planted in a kindly soil, can never cease to affect the condition and prospects of mankind, but will, from age to age, yield abundant, though, perhaps, sometimes deadly, fruits. The knife of the assassin arrested the execution of it by Henry himself; but, to this moment, the descendants of those over whom he ruled cling with undiminished passion to the hope which he first excited—the hope that, by the propagation of their language and opinions, by the skill of their diplomatists, and by the terror of their arms, France may at length acquire an authority, or an influence, like that of Imperial Rome, over every land in which, in his age, Papal Rome had established her spiritual dominion.

It is not, however, on these grounds alone, that the reign of Henry IV. occupies a memorable position in the constitutional history of his country. It was a period of great consummations and of great beginnings. Like some inland sea, which is at once the

receptacle of many converging, and the source of as many diverging, streams, it was interposed between two æras strikingly contrasted with each other. It marked the close of the mediæval sovereignty, and the commencement of the modern monarchy,—the first a dominion of undefined rights, of unsettled habits, and of a fluctuating policy,—the second, a government absolute in fact and in right, severely consistent in its arbitrary principles, but elaborately adapted to the various exigencies of a civilised commonwealth. The hitherto unorganised elements of the state were now, for the first time, reduced into a political unity. The invidious distinctions of earlier times now began to give place to social equality; and the slow, though stedfast, progress of that unity and of that equality may be considered as the subject of the whole of the subsequent history of France. In the triumph of these two principles consists the peculiar distinction, and the chief boast, of the French polity, whether monarchical or republican, of our times; and, therefore, the age of Henry IV., when considered as the origin of these great national characteristics, demands, and will repay, the most diligent attention.

For, first, the student of that reign will discover that it was the period when all legislative, executive, and administrative powers were first accurately distributed amongst the various ministers of the Crown, and carefully concentrated in the Crown itself. Secondly; he will learn that it was then that the nobles, ceasing to be the rivals, became the courtiers, of their sovereign, and exchanged much of their ancient power and dignity for an accession of splendour and of wealth. Thirdly; from the same epoch may be dated the appearance and the recognition of the noblesse of the robe; that is, of roturiers, who, being

ennobled by the hereditary tenure of judicial offices, attracted to themselves much of the aristocratic importance which had, till then, been enjoyed exclusively by the territorial nobility. Fourthly; about the same period, may be discerned the first development of that moral and intellectual influence of men of letters, in the presence of which the influence of illustrious birth and of traditionary honours gradually waned and lost its hold on the reverence of mankind. Fifthly; then, also, were seen to arise a class of monied men, who, by fortunes acquired in commerce, eclipsed the magnificence of the great lords who had inherited their estates through many generations. And, finally, in the reign of Henry IV. also, the different classes of society were fused together in a manner till then unknown, partly in consequence of the participation of all ranks in the profound excitement and devotional fervour of the religious wars, and partly in consequence of the protracted and intimate association with each other, which had prevailed between the three orders of the States General at Blois, at Orleans, and at Paris, and between the constituent bodies who had been so often convened for the election of the deputies to those States in all the different bailliages of the kingdom.

But while these various causes were concentrating the powers of the government, and approximating the different classes of Frenchmen to one common level, social equality was not to establish her dominion in France, except at the expense of bitter animosities and sanguinary contests. The aristocratic and plebeian rivalries, which had been suppressed during the wars of religion, had not been then extinguished. Those meaner passions were striking new and vigorous roots, even then, when the external in-

dications of them had, for the moment, disappeared. While brought into an unwonted intimacy by the joint prosecution of their common objects, political or religious, the Nobles and the Commons were each taking the measure of the strength and the pretensions of the other. The privileged orders were then taught some humiliating lessons of the real inferiority of their own powers; and, at the same time, the Tiers Etat became aware of their own comparative weight and importance in the state. The conservative possessors of rank were exasperated by the fear of new encroachments. The aggressive aspirants after distinction were animated by the hopes of new conquests; and when the great confederacy of the League was dissolved, there had become distinctly perceptible the omens of another national controversy, in which each of the Three Estates of the realm were to contend for the maintenance, or the subversion, of those privileges, which had hitherto detached them so widely from each other. For that conflict nothing was wanting but a convenient occasion, and an appropriate theatre.

Such an occasion and such a theatre were supplied in October, 1614, when, in obedience to the summons of Louis XIII., the States General of France were assembled at Paris. Although, according to the strict law, Louis had at that time attained his majority, he was really a boy in his fourteenth year, in tutelage to his mother, Marie de Medici. She was the feeble head of a licentious and disaffected court. To purchase the support of the great lords of the realm, she had squandered a large part of the treasure which had been amassed by the providence of Sully. But the sacrifice was ineffectual. Condé, d'Epernon, and the other chiefs of the old religious factions were

in arms, at the head of their followers. The Protestants were on the eve of a new religious war. The Papal court and the Jesuits were propagating ultramontane doctrines, to which the recent assassinations of Henry III. and Henry IV. had given a fearful significance. The people at large, especially in the south, were victims of the most abject poverty and distress; and the popular writers of the age were agitating critical and dangerous questions; as, for example, why the interests of a great nation should all be staked on the life of a single man? and why the welfare of millions should depend on the wisdom of that one man's domestic councillors?

Alarmed by the gathering tempest, the Queen-mother at one time sought, in alliances with the House of Austria, a protection against the people she had been called to govern; and, at another time, she summoned their representatives to meet at Paris, to assist her with their counsels.

Florimond de Rapine is the great contemporary historian of the proceedings of the assembly which met in obedience to this royal citation. The general effect of his narrative is to show that, in this last convention of the representatives of the States General under the old monarchy, the three orders of which they were composed broke out into an open and irreconcileable hostility. Concurring, indeed, in that ancient constitutional jealousy of the Crown by which their predecessors had been animated, they agreed in deprecating the dissolution of the States before their complaints for the redress of grievances should have actually ripened into royal enactments; and they were, therefore, unanimous in resolving to commence their labours, by preferring to the king a joint petition, demanding redress of some few of the more promi-

nent of the evils under which their constituents were labouring. By this method it was assumed that they would deprive the court of any plausible pretext for evading the required concessions, by postponing their answer until after the close of the session.

But though unanimous in concerting this plan of operations, they could not agree in carrying it into effect. The Clergy proposed that, in the select list of grievances, the foremost place should be assigned to the wrong done to the Church by the long neglect of the Crown to receive the decrees of the Council of Trent as binding on all persons within the realm of France. To that proposal the Nobles gave a slow and reluctant adhesion; the Tiers Etat, a peremptory and contemptuous refusal. They denied the necessity for any such request to the Crown;—inquired why the Clergy did not themselves inculcate reverence for the Tridentine Decrees by their own voluntary obedience to them;—why, for example, such of them as had two or more benefices did not conform to the laws of the synod, by resigning them in favour of other pastors who had none.

After setting aside the scheme of the Clergy by this and similar sarcasms, the Tiers Etat proceeded to exhibit their own project. They advised that the joint preliminary petition of the three orders should embrace four grievances. These were, first, the undue magnitude of the pension list; secondly, the excessive pressure of the tailles; thirdly, the venality of public offices; and, fourthly, the annual tax, called the paulette, which was paid to the Crown as the price of the hereditary tenure of them. In the two last suggestions the Clergy and the Noblesse willingly acquiesced, because the advantage derived from the traffic in public employments, and from the heritable

title to them, was enjoyed exclusively by the roturiers. But they refused to solicit either a reduction of the tailles, from which they were themselves exempt, or a decrease of the pensions of which their own orders were the sole recipients.

Unable, as the Three Estates thus were, to concur in the demands to be made for the relief of their constituents, they were still more decidedly at variance as to the demands to be made for the security of the king himself. Alarmed by the recent excommunications and murders of their two last sovereigns, and animated by the habitual propensity of Frenchmen to a verbal defiance of the Papal court, the Tiers Etat resolved to place at the head of their cahier a request, that it might be enacted as a fundamental and inviolable law of the kingdom, "that no power on earth, whether spiritual or temporal, hath any right either to deprive the realm of France of the sacred persons of her kings, or for any cause or any ground whatever to dispense or absolve their subjects from the fealty or obedience due to them;" and they desired to add the request, that the contrary opinion might be declared "to be impious and detestable, opposed to truth and to the constitution of the state of France, which is immediately dependent on God alone." Against this suggestion the Clergy entered a vehement protest. They declared it to be nothing less than an attempt to establish the English oath of abjuration. They announced their readiness to suffer martyrdom, rather than participate in such an outrage on the spiritual authority of the pope. The kings of the earth, they said, were bound to lick the dust from the feet of the Church, submitting themselves to her authority in the person of the sovereign pontiff. They maintained that such an enactment

would encroach on the lawful authority of the spiritual power, to which alone it belonged to determine how far the pope was entitled to depose kings, and to absolve their subjects from their oaths of allegiance; and, adopting the celebrated Jesuitical doctrine of probability, they declared that, in the absence of such a decision, the affirmative and the negative of that question were equally probable, and might alike be holden and acted upon with good conscience.

Such was the violence of the contention, that the Clergy had threatened to retire from the States General, and to place the kingdom under an interdict; when, to terminate the dispute, the court evoked the article in debate; that is, they assumed to the king himself the exclusive consideration of it, and directed that the passage of the cahier referring to it should be expunged.

The speeches to which these and similar controversies between the three orders gave occasion, afford a yet clearer illustration of the antipathies by which the different classes of society were at this time alienated from each other. Montaigne, one of the orators of the Tiers Etat (who has been strangely confounded, by more than one eminent French writer, with his illustrious namesake), denounced the baseness of the noble pensioners of his age, with a vehemence into which all the wrongs which were ever done on the face of the earth could never have betrayed the philosophical essayist. "Is he who serves his king in hope of a pension (demanded the speaker) a good and faithful subject? Alas for the unworthy Frenchmen, French in nothing but the name, who serve your king as mercenaries! If your hearts were touched with the true spirit of

obedience, you would serve him not for money, but because he reigns over you by the law of France, and by the law of nature, and by the law of God."

Savaron, another commoner, seems to have excelled in that rhetorical artifice by which the deepest wounds are inflicted in eulogistic phrases, and the deadliest sting is disguised beneath the most affectionate language. In the form of sarcastic apologies, he poured out a series of bitter reproaches upon the Noblesse. After depicting the stupidity which had induced them to abandon the judicial office to men of humble birth,—he affects to account for it as a respectable prejudice. After showing that they had abstained from purchasing public offices, because they were incapable of discharging public duties, — he sneeringly applauds the rectitude and generosity of their forbearance. And when he condemned the conduct of the Nobles to his own order, he, at the same time, respectfully acknowledged that the Nobles were their elder brethren; — anticipating, perhaps, but doubtless rejoicing in, the preposterous violence of their answer, that they would not allow themselves to be addressed as brethren by the sons of cobblers and soap boilers, who were as much their inferiors as the valet is below his master.

We find Robert Miron, a third of these champions of the Commons, thus apostrophising the king with all the energy of a tribune of the people. "That man's heart," he said, "must be surrounded by triple brass, and fenced with a rampart of adamant, who can think of the miseries of your subjects without tears and lamentations. For the support of your kingdom they toil incessantly, regardless of their health and of their lives. They have their sweat and their wretchedness for their pains. Whatever else they gain is

consumed by the tailles, the gabelles, the aides, and the other subventions of your majesty. Yet, even when thus stript of everything, they are still required to provide for certain persons, who, abusing your sacred name, harass them by commissions, by inquests, and by other oppressive inventions. It is nothing less than a miracle that they are able to answer so many demands. On the labour of *their* hands depends the maintenance of your majesty, of the ecclesiastics, of the noblesse, and of the commons. What without *their* exertions would be the value of the tithes and great possessions of the Church, of the splendid estates and fiefs of the nobility, or of our own houses, rents, and inheritances? With their bones scarcely skinned over, your wretched people present themselves before you, beaten down and helpless, with the aspect rather of death itself than of living men, imploring your succour in the name of Him who has appointed you to reign over them; who made you a man, that you might be merciful to other men; and who made you the father of your subjects, that you might be compassionate to these your helpless children. If your majesty shall not take measures for that end, I fear lest despair should teach the sufferers that a soldier is, after all, nothing more than a peasant bearing arms; and lest, when the vine-dresser shall have taken up his arquebus, he should cease to become an anvil only that he may become a hammer."

In the midst of these sarcasms and invectives was raised another, and a far more impressive, voice. It was that of Armand Duplessis de Richelieu, then in his thirtieth year, the descendant of an ancient family in Poitou, who, after having been trained to arms, had been appointed, at an early age, to the bishopric of Luçon. He was distinguished amongst the members

of his own order in the States General as one of the ablest and most effective of their speakers. As if to justify that praise, he has preserved in his Memoirs the oration which he delivered at the final meeting of the States in the royal presence. It shows how much he was in advance of his age, as to the real objects and right use of rhetoric. With the exception of a few occasional sacrifices to the pedantic taste of the times, it is throughout clear, vigorous, and to the purpose. It depicts, in precise and comprehensive terms, the grievances of the people, but especially of the clergy of France; and dwells with an amusing, but prophetic, emphasis on the benefits which the kingdom would derive, from the admission of the more enlightened prelates into the royal counsels.

On the 23rd of February, 1625, after four months of eloquent disputations and assiduous labours, the Clergy, the Nobles, and the Tiers Etat presented to the king their cahiers of grievances. On the following day the Tiers Etat returned to their usual place of meeting, in the hope that some communication would then be made to them of the measures to be taken in pursuance of their demands. But, in that short interval, the place had been the subject of a metamorphosis at which some appear to have wept, though assuredly but few Frenchmen could have refused also to smile at so whimsical a contrast. The president's throne, the secretaries' chairs, the members' benches, and the speakers' tribune, had all given place to painted orchestras, gilded sideboards, embroidered stools, and silken cushions; in short, to the preparations for a ball to be given by the sister of Louis to the cavaliers of his court. The impression produced by this disappointment on Flori-

mond Rapine and his associates, is amusingly described by himself. "We began," he says, "to see, as in a mirror, all our errors, and regretted the cowardice and weakness of our past proceedings. Day by day we paced the pavement of the cloister of the Augustines, to learn what was to happen. Everybody was asking news from the court; nobody had anything certain to tell. One man depicted the public calamities; the next criticised the language of the chancellor and his partisans; the third smote on his breast, bemoaning his unprofitable journey; while another was counting up the minutes which must elapse before he might quit his hateful residence at Paris, and forget the expiring liberties of his country in the quiet of his home and the caresses of his family. All were agreed in devising means for obtaining our dismissal from a city, in which we were now wandering idly up and down, with nothing to do, either for the public or in our private affairs." Among the deputies some, however, appear to have been of a sterner mood. One of them indignantly exclaimed, "Are we not the very same men who yesterday entered the royal presence chamber, to complete the most important transaction which could happen in France? Or can a single night have so totally changed our rank, our station, and our authority?" "Are we not the same men to-day that we were yesterday," exclaimed the Abbé Sieyes, one hundred and seventy-four years later, in the Tennis Court of Versailles. The phrase which, in the reign of Louis XIII., had served only to turn a period, was sufficient, in the reign of his successor, to expedite a revolution.

We must not, however, judge lightly of the real importance of this convention of the States General

of France in the 17th century. Their petitions were productive, though at the distance of fifteen years, of some beneficial enactments; and the principles which they asserted were the salient, though the long dormant, springs of those great changes, which eventually gave a new character to all the political institutions of the kingdom. Thus the adjustment, which the Tiers Etat proposed to establish, of the great controversy of the League, became the basis, and was almost the text, of the declaration framed by Bossuet, and adopted by almost all the bishops of the Gallican Church, in the year 1682. And thus, also, they anticipated four at least of the great political doctrines of France in the age in which we live: the doctrines, that is, of the equality of all men in the eye of the law, — of the subordination of all judicial tribunals to one supreme and superintending judicature, — of the uniformity of the rates of export and import duties in every district of the state, — and of the right of all men freely to engage in every branch of commerce. Concurring in these demands, the Clergy separated their cause from that of the other two orders by the extravagance of their ecclesiastical pretensions; while the Noblesse constituted themselves the apologists for all those abuses which were crushed at the first rude shock of the Revolution of 1789. Had the Three Estates been unanimous, they might have averted that catastrophe; for their united power would have been sufficient to have given a new tendency and character to the whole of the subsequent history of France. But, by their dissensions, they afforded the court of Louis XIII. a specious, if not, indeed, a reasonable, escape from all the reforms which the Tiers Etat had so earnestly demanded. The time

was, perhaps, unripe for such innovations, and it was presumptuously concluded that it would *never* ripen. So at least judged the Queen-mother and her advisers. But it was with a much further sighted prescience that Richelieu had contemplated the scene in which he had borne so conspicuous a part. He had observed how great was the rising power of the Commons, how enlightened their policy, how formidable their moral influence, and, at the same time, how ill regulated their passions: he had studied the means of rendering those passions subservient to his schemes of absolute dominion; nor was the period remote in which he was to reduce to practice the result of those profound meditations. That period, however, had not as yet come.

When deprived of the guidance of the States General, the mass of society turned for leaders to the Parliament of Paris. It was one of the favourite maxims of that company, that they were *les Etats Généraux au petit pied;* that is, that they were the depositaries of their powers when the States themselves were not in session. Though it was impossible to discover any law, it was easy enough to find authoritative suffrages in support of this doctrine; for the Parliament had a strong hold on the confidence and affections of society. Although many of the members of it were nobles, the councillors or judicial members were invariably commoners, though, indeed, commoners of the highest consideration. Their learning, their integrity, and their public spirit merited, and were rewarded by, universal esteem. A large proportion of them had the advantage of great wealth, and the habitual demeanour of them all was that of men justly confident in their own position and autho-

rity. In them the people admired and revered the fearless antagonists of the nobles, of the favourites, and of the court. They passed for the guardians of the liberties of the Gallican Church, and for defenders of national, as opposed to foreign, interests. Moreover, they formed a compact and united phalanx. They were, or seemed to be, the one stable bulwark in the state, beneath which the weak might hope to find shelter from oppression, and under the shelter of which the public liberties could be securely nourished.

And yet, as often as the Parliament advanced beyond the limits of their appropriate judicial functions, they were in reality feeble, if not impotent. In their conflicts with the Crown and its officers, they had no effective constitutional weapon. They could, indeed, refuse to register a royal edict. They could pronounce eloquent remonstrances. They could retire, with the most imposing dignity, into prison or to exile. But then their quiver was exhausted. Their political story is thus the record of enterprises commenced with all imaginable pomp, and ended with all imaginable meanness; of prodigies of moral courage dwindling away into pitiful intrigues; of patriotic designs terminating in civil wars; and of loyal enterprises resulting in traitorous alliances with the foreign enemies of their kings.

Since the dissolution of the States General of 1614, a month had not passed before the Parliament had embarked in one of these desperate undertakings. They had convened all the nobles and public officers who were members, though not councillors, of their body, to deliberate on certain proposals to be made for the service of the king, for the good of the state, and for the solace of the people. The arrêt was a

manifest usurpation, and was promptly and indignantly annulled by an order of the king in council. They met to remonstrate against this mandate, and were again commanded to desist. They then actually prepared, and, in imitation of the States General they delivered to Louis, a cahier of public grievances, and were answered by a peremptory interdict against their further interference in any affairs of state. The perplexed magistrates, at the end of their resources, now betook themselves to the debate of points of law, and to the investigation of theories of government. To cut the knot by which the lawyers had been baffled, their noble and military colleagues drew their swords. In defence, as they pretended, of their company, the Prince of Condé, and the Dukes of Bouillon, Mayenne, and Longueville, plunged their country into a civil war; a war as ignominious in its close, as it had been unjustifiable in its commencement.

Seduced by a donation from the court of 6,000,000 livres, those aristocratic commanders abandoned the field almost as soon as they had entered it, leaving to the councillors of the Parliament the responsibility, the ridicule, and the reproach of this extravagant rebellion.

It was no light responsibility; for, in the wanton levity of their hearts, the Parliamentarians had once more kindled the flames, not of civil war only, but of a new war of religion. Condé, indeed, was a bigoted Catholic, but such was still the attachment of the Huguenots for the name he bore, that many of them joined the standard which, as his manifesto assured them, he had raised to prevent the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and to rescue themselves from massacre. His perfidious and mercenary abandonment of their cause left them the helpless victims of

the vengeance which they had but too justly provoked. A new persecution fell with terrible weight on the Protestant inhabitants of Bearn, and those outrages yielded in their turn the ordinary and natural results of a vindictive reaction. The deputies of the Calvinistic churches, at a synod or diet holden at La Rochelle, resolved to divide the whole kingdom into eight circles, over each of which a Protestant commander was to preside, though all of those commanders were to be placed under the orders of the Duc de Bouillon, as the military head of the whole confederacy. By these chiefs, armies were to be raised, officers appointed, and taxes levied; but the power of making peace was specially reserved by the assembly to themselves.

The pretext for this traitorous conspiracy (for it was nothing less) was supplied by those provisions of the Edict of Nantes, which seemed to recognise in the Protestants the right of defending their privileges with arms, and of deliberating, in general assemblies, on all the interests of their churches. Such a construction of the edict was, however, sufficiently refuted by the absurdity of the consequences it involved. Henry IV. could not have designed, as assuredly he was not entitled, to authorise the establishment, within the realm of France, of an independent religious and military republic, protected by assemblies, troops, revenues, and foreign alliances of its own. No government could rationally admit, or safely disregard, a pretension at once so extravagant and so formidable. How formidable, may be inferred from the fact, that although the Dukes of Rohan and Soubise were the only two of the eight elected commanders who accepted that perilous charge, and although Saintonge, Guienne, Quercy, and Lan-

guedoc were the only provinces of France in which the confederates of La Rochelle found any support, yet, even with their resources thus unexpectedly reduced, they continued, during sixteen months, to maintain hostilities on equal terms with the royal armies, and at length obtained a pacification, on conditions so favourable as to show that they had effectually balanced, and held in check, the power of their sovereign.

It was immediately after this period that Richelieu first obtained admission to the council of state. He might seem to have been born to supply the deficiencies of the king, and to impart to his dormant virtues the life and energy of which they stood in need. For Louis was a man of large and just capacity. His ideas of the duties of his station were princely and magnanimous. He lived in profound submission to the law of his conscience, in the fear of God, and in veneration for all men in whom he saw, or thought he saw, any image, however faint, of the Divine beneficence and power. But he was of a feeble, indolent, and melancholy spirit. He was habitually wrapt in reveries, sometimes splendid, though more often gloomy; but he was always incapable of prompt or decisive action. Though a king, he never was, and never could have been, a free man. It was among the necessities of his existence to live under the government of a master. After selecting and rejecting many such, he at length submitted himself to the dominion of Richelieu, and thenceforward endured that bondage to the last. He endured it certainly, neither from attachment nor from fear, but because, as often as he struggled to regain his liberty, his efforts were baffled by his admiration of the genius of his great minister, and by his persuasion

that no other man could so effectually promote the welfare of his state and people.

Richelieu, on the other hand, was one of the rulers of mankind in virtue of an inherent and indefeasible birthright. His title to command rested on that sublime force of will, and decision of character, by which, in an age of great men, he was raised above them all. It is a gift which supposes and requires in him on whom it is conferred, convictions too firm to be shaken by the discovery of any unperceived or unheeded truths. It is, therefore, a gift, which, when bestowed on the governors of nations, also presupposes in them the patience to investigate, the capacity to comprehend, and the genius to combine, all those views of the national interest, under the guidance of which their inflexible policy is to be conducted to its destined consummation. For the stoutest hearted of men, if acting in ignorance, or under the impulse of haste or of error, must often pause, often hesitate, and not seldom recede. Richelieu was exposed to no such danger. He moved onwards to his predetermined ends with that unfaltering step which attests, not merely a stern immutability of purpose, but a comprehensive survey of the path to be trodden, and a profound acquaintance with all its difficulties and all its resources. It was a path from which he could be turned aside neither by his bad nor by his good genius; neither by fear, lassitude, interest, or pleasure; nor by justice, pity, humanity, or conscience.

The idolatrous homage of mere mental power, without reference to the motives by which it is governed, or to the ends to which it is addressed, — that blind hero-worship, which would place Wallenstein and Gustavus Adolphus on the same level, and extol

with equal warmth the triumphs of Cromwell and of Washington, though it be a modern fashion, has certainly not the charm of novelty. On the contrary it might, in the language of the Puritans, be described as one of the "old follies of the old Adam;" and, to the influence of that folly, the reputation of Richelieu is not a little indebted.

In *his* estimate, the absolute dominion of the French Crown and the grandeur of France were convertible terms. They seemed to him but as two different aspects of the great consummation to which every hour of his political life was devoted. In approaching that ultimate goal, there were to be surmounted many obstacles which he distinctly perceived, and of which he has given a very clear summary in his Testament Politique. "When it pleased your majesty," he says, "to give me not only a place in your council, but a great share in the conduct of your affairs, the Huguenots divided the state with you. The great lords were acting not as your subjects, but as independent chieftains. The governors of your provinces were conducting themselves like so many sovereign princes. Foreign affairs and alliances were disregarded. The interest of the public was postponed to that of private men. In a word, your authority was, at that time, so torn to shreds, and so unlike what it ought to be, that, in the confusion, it was impossible to recognise the genuine traces of your royal power."

Before his death, Richelieu had triumphed over all these enemies, and had elevated the House of Bourbon upon their ruins. He is, I believe, the only human being who ever conceived and executed, in the spirit of philosophy, the design of erecting a political despotism; not, indeed, a despotism like that

of Constantinople or Teheran, but a power which, being restrained by religion, by learning, and by public spirit, was to be exempted from all other restraints; a dynasty which, like a kind of subordinate providence, was to spread wide its arms for the guidance and shelter of the subject multitude; itself the while inhabiting a region too lofty to be ever darkened by the mists of human weakness, or of human corruption.

To devise schemes worthy of the academies of Laputa, and to pursue them with all the relentless perseverance of Cortes or of Clive, has been characteristic of many of the statesmen of France, both in remote and in recent times. Richelieu was but a more successful Mirabeau. He was not so much a minister as a dictator. He was rather the depositary, than the agent, of the royal power. A king in all things but the name, he reigned with that exemption from hereditary and domestic influences, which has so often imparted to the papal monarchs a kind of preterhuman energy, and has as often taught the world to deprecate the celibacy of the throne.

Richelieu was the heir of the designs of Henry IV., and the ancestor of those of Louis XIV. But they courted, and were sustained by, the applause and the attachment of their subjects. He passed his life in one unintermitted struggle with each, in turn, of the powerful bodies over whom he ruled. By a long series of well-directed blows, he crushed for ever the political and military strength of the Huguenots. By his strong hand, the sovereign courts were confined to their judicial duties, and their claims to participate in the government of the state were scattered to the winds. Trampling under foot all rules of judicial procedure and the clearest principles of justice,

he brought to the scaffold one after another of the proudest nobles of France, by sentences dictated by himself, to extraordinary judges of his own selection; thus teaching the doctrine of social equality, by lessons too impressive to be misinterpreted or forgotten by any later generation. Both the privileges, in exchange for which the greater fiefs had surrendered their independence, and the franchises, for the conquest of which the cities, in earlier times, had successfully contended, were alike swept away by this remorseless innovator. He exiled the mother, oppressed the wife, degraded the brother, banished the confessor, and put to death the kinsmen and favourites of the king, and compelled the king himself to be the instrument of these domestic severities. Though surrounded by enemies and by rivals, his power ended only with his life. Though beset by assassins, he died in the ordinary course of nature. Though he had waded to dominion through slaughter, cruelty, and wrong, he passed to his great account amidst the applause of the people, with the benedictions of the Church; and, as far as any human eye could perceive, in hope, in tranquillity, and in peace.

What, then, is the reason why so tumultuous a career reached at length so serene a close? The reason is, that, amidst all his conflicts, Richelieu wisely and successfully maintained three powerful alliances. He cultivated the attachment of men of letters, the favour of the commons, and the sympathy of all French idolaters of the national glory.

He was a man of extensive, if not of profound, learning, a theologian of some account, and an aspirant for fame as a dramatist, a wit, a poet, and an historian. But if his claims to admiration as a writer were disputable, none contended his title to applause

as a patron of literature and of art. The founder of a despotism in the world of politics, he aspired also to be the founder of a commonwealth in the world of letters. While crushing the national liberties, he founded the French Academy as the sacred shrine of intellectual freedom and independence. Acknowledging no equal in the state, he forbad the acknowledgment, in that literary republic, of any superiority save that of genius. While refusing to bare his head to any earthly potentate, he would permit no eminent author to stand bare-headed in his presence. By these cheap, and not dishonest arts, he gained an inestimable advantage. The honours he conferred on the men of learning of his age they largely repaid, by placing under his control the mainsprings of public opinion.

To conciliate the commons of France, Richelieu even ostentatiously divested himself of every prejudice hostile to his popularity. A prince of the Church of Rome, he cherished the independence of the Gallican Church and clergy. The conqueror of the Calvinists, he yet respected the rights of conscience. Of noble birth and ancestry, his demeanour was still that of a tribune of the people. But it was not by demeanour alone that he laboured to win their regard. He affected the more solid praise of large and salutary reformations.

At the distance of fifteen years from the close of the States General of 1614, he had matured the plans by which he proposed not only to give effect to the cahier of the Tiers Etat, but even to advance far beyond the limits within which they had circumscribed their requests. To have accomplished his designs by the unaided powers of the Crown, would have been to deprive of much of its grace the boon

he intended to confer. To have sought the concurrence of the States General in a new assembly, would have been to counteract his great purpose of elevating the Crown above all popular control. He avoided the dilemma by the convention of an assembly of Notables selected by himself. It comprised fifty-five members, amongst whom no duke, nor peer, nor provincial governor had a place. The majority were commoners, but commoners of high distinction, drawn from the various sovereign courts of the realm. In the States General the initiative of all cahiers, or requests for the redress of grievances, belonged to the three orders. In the assembly of Notables, Richelieu claimed it for himself. In his indications of the general objects with a view to which new laws were requisite, he more than anticipated the hopes of the people. Little is it to be wondered that their enthusiasm was fired by projects of which the following are an example.

The king was to be requested to remit all taxes affecting those of his subjects who were either engaged in productive labour, or suffering under urgent want, —to throw open promotion in the army to every class of society,—to maintain an exact balance between the receipt and the expenditure of the treasury,—to increase the navy for the protection of commerce,—to establish new commercial companies,—to form new canals,—to rescue the husbandmen from the rapacity of the troops by a stricter discipline, and a punctual payment of their wages,—and to dismantle every fortress and castle which was not actually required for the defence of the realm.

A more captivating programme of reforms has not been produced in our own days before the National Assembly of Paris, or the commercial hall of Man-

chester. It was welcomed with delight, and then transferred to commissioners charged with the duty of translating these abstract doctrines into circumstantial edicts. But, in the case of the last of his proposals, Richelieu saw fit to dispense with any such formality. He summoned the people at once to execute the sentence passed against the fortresses and castles of their lords. Never was a royal injunction more zealously obeyed. In every province and city of France myriads of plebeian hands were joyfully raised to demolish the strongholds which they had so long dreaded, and so cordially abhorred. The work of destruction was done with order and with calmness. Not one stone was left upon another which could again serve to shelter the oppressions of the lords. Not one stone was cast down which might serve as a monument of the ancient faith or institutions of their country.

The completion of this labour of love was promptly rewarded by the promulgation of the royal edict designed to give effect to the cahiers of the Notables. It comprised four hundred and sixty-one articles, ranging over every branch of the internal polity of the realm:—civil law and penal law—ecclesiastical affairs and education—justice and finance—commerce and canals—the army and the navy. But the art of codification may flourish without any advancement being made in the still greater art of legislation. The code of Richelieu, like many other French codes before his time and since, was the Promethean statue without the Promethean fire. It wanted nothing except a living principle. Its great author had also been the author of an irresistible despotism. The elder of his offspring devoured the younger. Having created a power superior to all

law, it mattered little or nothing what laws he afterwards called into existence.

Thirdly. The strength of Richelieu consisted in his alliance with the idolaters of the national glory. By wars, successful if not brilliant, by negotiations judiciously conducted, by many treacheries, and by a policy philanthropic in pretence, but profoundly selfish in reality, he transferred to the House of Bourbon the ancient influence of the House of Austria. The once formidable armies of Spain were finally crushed at Rocroi, at Nordlingen, and at Lens, and the Peace of Westphalia established amongst the powers of Europe a balance, of which the adjustment and the superintendence thenceforward belonged to France. It is true, indeed, that five years had passed from the death of Richelieu before those victories were won, and that peace was made. Yet, as they were the immediate fruits of his policy, and the direct results of the impulse given by him, they were not unjustly regarded as triumphs won under his auspices, and as trophies to his fame.

With what enthusiasm the Frenchmen of his own age regarded the great author of their national aggrandisement may, perhaps, be best inferred from the following passage which occurs in a prefatory discourse, which, so lately as the year 1850, was prefixed, by so considerable a person as M. Augustin Thierry, to one of those volumes of the national records, for the publication of which the world is indebted to M. Guizot;—a discourse to which I gladly acknowledge my own obligations for a more profound and comprehensive survey than I have elsewhere seen of those passages of the history of France to which our attention has been directed on the present occasion. "The exterior policy of Riche-

lieu," observes M. Thierry, "has the singular merit that, after the lapse of two centuries, it is still as living and as national as at the day of its birth. Since the fall of the Roman empire that policy has never ceased, if I may use such an expression, to form a part of the national conscience. It is the policy which the nation has demanded with importunity, and with menaces, of each of the two dynasties which it has so lately crushed. It is the policy which the nation demands now, when restored to her full liberty of action. It consists in the maintenance of independent nationalities, in the enfranchisement of oppressed nationalities, and in respect for the bonds resulting from the community of language and of race. When speaking on the question of the right of France to an aggrandisement which would give her a definite frontier — a question often proposed during three centuries, and still pending, Henry IV. said, 'I desire that all who speak Spanish should belong to Spain, and all who speak German to Germany, but that all who speak French should be mine.' On the same subject Richelieu said, 'the object of my administration has been to re-establish the natural limits of Gaul, to identify Gaul and France, and to render the limits of the new Gaul coincident with those of the old.' From these principles combined together, and moderating each other, will result, in the ripeness of the time, the ultimate limitation of the soil of France, of that soil to which we have a title legitimate and perpetual — a title resting on the double foundation of history and of nature."

The hopes thus frankly, and perhaps incautiously, avowed a few months ago by one of the greatest of the living historians of France, though originally

excited by Richelieu, first received a definite form and a tangible substance in the reign of Louis XIV. The prejudices of M. Thierry and of his fellow-countrymen may dispose them greatly to overrate the real grandeur of that era. Our own prejudices are not less prone to undervalue it. In unadorned truth, however, it is the most splendid, if not the only splendid, period of the ancient French monarchy. It gave birth to more remarkable events, and to more illustrious personages, than any other. It was then that the territory of France received its principal enlargement. It was then that the administration of her government was first reduced to any well-ascertained system, or conducted on any self-consistent principles. It was the age of her greatest mechanical and manufacturing inventions. The codes of French jurisprudence were then first reduced into method, and France then possessed her greatest generals and her most illustrious writers.

But there is a dark reverse to this brilliant picture. It was in the reign of Louis XIV., also, that France was afflicted by calamities fearfully contrasted with her recent glories in arms, in arts, and in literature. After eloquence, and poetry, and sculpture, and painting had exhausted their powers in celebrating the triumphs and the felicities of le Grand Monarque, history had to describe the evening of that bright day overcast by famines, by persecutions, by bankruptcy, by defeats, by invasions, and by the domestic sorrows which shed so deep a gloom over the later years of the once idolised king. But that passage of the annals of France is especially important, because it affords the most complete exhibition which we possess, of the real character of her absolute monarchy. To that subject I, therefore,

propose to devote my next three lectures, considering the reign of Louis, first, in his minority, that is, during the wars of the Fronde and the administration of Mazarin; secondly, in his early manhood, that is, during the administration of Colbert and Louvois; and, thirdly, in his declining years, that is, during the conduct of the government by Louis himself in person. That division will bring under review each in turn of the most momentous constitutional questions of that eventful period.

LECTURE XXI.

ON THE ABSOLUTE MONARCHY DURING THE MINORITY OF LOUIS XIV.

Soon after the surrender of Bourdeaux to the arms of Mazarin, three of his defeated antagonists accompanied him, in his carriage, to a short distance from the city. As they rolled along, the Cardinal gaily exclaimed, "Who would have thought, a week ago, that, by this time of day, we four should be sitting together so much at our ease?"—"Tout arrive en France," was the characteristic answer of La Rochefoucauld, one of his fellow-travellers. There is no better example, even in his own maxims, of the art of compressing much truth into a narrow compass, than is afforded by this epitome of the civil wars in which he was then engaged. For never, before or since, did so many marvellous personages crowd into the space of four years so many marvellous doings, to be afterwards recorded by such a series of marvellous writers. The Fronde is a protracted drama, where, in defiance

of all French theatrical laws, tragedy, comedy, and buffoonery struggle for the pre-eminence, but where, nevertheless, a French critic might be pleased to recognise some approach to two of the three indispensable unities of his national stage—those, namely, of action and of place.

On the 14th May, 1643, Louis XIII. closed his melancholy life, and transmitted his crown to the fourteenth Louis, then a child in his fifth year. In the first week of the new reign, the armies of France under Condé won the splendid victory of Rocroi. With what rapture it was hailed by the people at large, may perhaps be inferred from the exulting eloquence in which, at the distance of fifty years, Bossuet revived, in one of his funeral orations, the impressions which that great triumph had produced upon his own boyish mind, when a student at the University of Paris. All was festivity and joy. The ruthless dominion of the austere Richelieu had given place to the indulgent rule of the affable Mazarin. The Queen-mother had thrown open, to the Parisian world, those princely halls, which her gloomy husband had devoted to monastic austerities. Prisoners discharged from captivity, exiles returning from foreign lands, thronged her brilliant court to participate in the hilarities of the new era, and to solicit compensation for their former sufferings. Such was the universal good humour, that, according to a courtly hyperbole of those joyous days, the whole French language was reduced to the five little words, "la Reine est si bonne."

Less obsequious observers, however, could perceive, beneath this flowery surface, the widely scattered seeds of approaching disaster. During the administration of Richelieu, many had really suffered in the cause of

Anne of Austria; and many more now ascribed to their zeal in her service the enmity which they had either endured, or apprehended, from the remorseless cardinal. To reject the demands of such ancient partisans, would be to insure their vindictive resentment. To accede to those demands, would be to provoke the hostility of all the other candidates for honours or advancement. It was an inextricable dilemma. A few weeks were sufficient to crowd the chambers of the Louvre with dissatisfied courtiers, bemoaning the disappointment of their long cherished hopes, celebrating their past merits, and denouncing the heartless ingratitude of princes. Their complaints and pretensions amused the laughter-loving people of Paris, and won for them the sobriquet of "*Les Importants.*" To themselves, however, such merriment seemed utterly misplaced. So keen, indeed, was their anger, that the leader of their cabal, the Duc de Beaufort, meditated mortal vengeance; and, as a punishment for the intended assassination of Mazarin, was sent to brood over his wrongs, as a prisoner of state, in the dismal towers of Vincennes.

To these embarrassments succeeded financial difficulties. The war was conducted with alternate success and failure, but with an unintermitted waste of the public revenue; and while Guébriant, Turenne, and Condé were maintaining the military renown of France, D'Emery, the superintendant of finance, was struggling with the far severer difficulty of raising her ways and means to the level of her expenditure. The internal history of the first five years of the regency is thenceforward a record of the contest between the Court and the Parliament of Paris;—between the Court, promulgating edicts to replenish the exhausted treasury, and the Parliament, remon-

strating in angry addresses against the acceptance of them. In some of those remonstrances, Omer Talon, the advocate general, addressed the Queen-mother in terms from which the orators of the National Convention might have borrowed proofs and illustrations of their favourite doctrines of the rights of man. But Anne of Austria listened to such eloquence in a spirit most unlike that of her descendant, Louis XVI. She seems to have regarded M. Talon in the light of a tragic actor, reciting a declamation from Corneille, and warmly extolled the rhetorical embellishments with which he had adorned it. Nor does the speaker himself appear to have foreseen the approach of any more genuine tragedy; for, just before his delivery of the last of those patriotic speeches, he recorded, in his still extant journal, his opinion that a great and universal calm had, at length, been firmly established throughout the kingdom. To understand how, and by whom, that calm was broken, it is necessary to recur, however briefly, to the constitution of the sovereign courts, which, at that period, had their seat in the Palais de Justice of Paris.

In ancient France, as I had formerly occasion to explain, the title of *Sovereign* was given to every court of justice, from the judgments of which there could be no appeal to any other tribunal. Four such courts were in practice, if not of right, always stationary in the capital. Of these the Parliament was the most considerable. It was a single company divided into five distinct chambers, called the Great Chamber—the Chamber "des Enquêtes"—the Chamber "de la Tournelle"—the Chamber "des Requêtes"—and the Chamber "de l'Edit."

First. The Great Chamber was composed of a high officer, called the first president; of nine presidents

à mortier (so called from their mortar-shaped velvet caps, which were the badge of sovereign justice); and of thirty-seven councillors, of whom twelve were clergymen and twenty-five laymen. These were the stipendiary members of the Great Chamber. But seats in it belonged to honorary members also. These were the princes of the blood—the dukes and peers of France—the chancellor or keeper of the great seal—the councillors of state—the archbishop of Paris—and the bailli of Clugny—to whom were added four masters of requests. To the Great Chamber belonged what was called "la haute direction" of the whole parliament, the cognisance of all charges of high treason, and jurisdiction in all cases affecting any peer of France, or any great officer of the Crown, or the University of Paris, or the hospitals of that city.

Secondly. The Chamber "des Enquêtes" was a court of appeal from all subordinate civil tribunals, and from all the courts of Police correctionelle. The councillors of this chamber were very numerous, and were usually young men, and amongst them were invariably found the most active political agitators of the Parliament.

Thirdly. The Chamber "de la Tournelle" was the court for adjudicating on all criminal cases brought before the Parliament by way of appeal.

Fourthly. The Chamber "des Requêtes" had, for their peculiar province, the decision of all cases specially reserved to the Parliament by the writ of committimus, which I formerly mentioned.

Fifthly. The Chamber "de l'Edit" was so called, because it was constituted, under the edict of pacification with the Protestants, to decide the causes in which they were chiefly concerned.

Although each of these five component chambers of the Parliament had thus separate functions, yet, when any royal edict was to be registered, or when any other political question was to be discussed, all the members of each met together as one united body. The exclusive right to convene any such general meetings was claimed by the Great Chamber, but that claim was disputed by the others, and especially by the Chamber "des Enquêtes," who asserted an equal right to summon any such conventions.

The three other sovereign courts of Paris were, the Chamber "des Comptes," the Cour des Aides, and the Grand Conseil.

The Chamber "des Comptes" was originally composed of officers of the Crown, selected from the Royal Council. It afterwards received a separate organisation not unlike that of our own Court of Exchequer; and, as we formerly saw, became at once an office for auditing the public accounts of the kingdom, and a court of justice for the decision of cases affecting the public revenue.

A large part of the judicial functions of the Chamber "des Comptes" was, however, afterwards transferred to the Cour des Aides. That court was also composed of officers or councillors of the Crown. The judicial powers of the Chamber "des Comptes" and of the Cour des Aides, though not altogether, were yet, to some degree, concurrent; but the Cour des Aides did not at all participate in the administrative powers of the Chamber "des Comptes" as auditors of the public revenue.

Finally. The Grand Conseil was a body exercising many high political functions, but also constituting a court of justice. It had cognisance of those cases from which other courts were specially excluded.

Such, for example, were cases which, by the evocation of the king, or by some peculiar privilege of the suitors, were exempt from the authority of the ordinary tribunals. The Grand Conseil had also, like the modern Cour de Cassation, the power to annul the judgments of other courts, when such judgments were self-contradictory, or when they encroached on the legislative or other prerogatives of the Crown.

The councillors or stipendiary judges of each of these four sovereign courts held their offices for life. But, in virtue of the law called the Paulette, to which I adverted on a former occasion, they also held them as an inheritance transmissible to their descendants. The Paulette, as I then stated, was a royal ordinance, which imposed an annual tax on the stipend of every judge. It was usually passed for a term of nine years only. If the judge died during that term, his heir was entitled to succeed to the vacant office. But if the death of the judge happened when the Paulette was not in force, his heir had no such right. Consequently, the renewal of the tax was always welcome to the stipendiary councillors of the sovereign courts; and, by refusing or delaying to renew it, the king could always exercise a powerful influence over them.

In April, 1647, the Paulette had expired, and the Queen-mother proposed the revival of it. But, to relieve the necessities of the treasury, she also proposed to increase the annual per centage which it imposed on the stipends of the councillors of the Chamber "des Comptes," of the Cour des Aides, and of the Grand Conseil. To concert measures of resistance to the contemplated innovation, those councillors held a meeting in the Great Hall of St. Louis; and at their request the Parliament, though not person-

ally and directly interested in the change, joined their assembly. It was an union too formidable to be needlessly encountered by the royal power; and, to escape such a conflict, the queen informed them that such was the profound attachment of the king, her son, for the judges of his four sovereign courts, that he would not only withdraw his proposal for an increase in the rate of the annual tax on their stipends, but would even graciously relieve them from that burden altogether.

There is a time and a place for all things, and, among the rest, for irony; but never in the speeches of kings. Exasperated by the threatened loss of the heritable tenure of their offices, and still more offended by the sarcastic terms in which that menace was conveyed, the judges assembled in the hall of St. Louis with increased zeal, and harangued there with yet more indignant eloquence. Four different times the queen interdicted their meetings, and four different times they answered her by renewed resolutions for the continuance of them. She threatened severe punishments, and they replied by remonstrances. A direct collision of authority had thus occurred, and it behoved either party to look well to their steps.

Of that necessity Anne of Austria was at length profoundly sensible. She had all the firmness of her race, but she regarded with reasonable alarm the results of such a controversy, and attempted to propitiate, by conciliatory language, the formidable power to which her menaces had been addressed in vain. But the associated magistrates derived new boldness from the lowered tone and apparent fears of the government. Soaring at once above the humble topic on which they had hitherto been engaged, into the region of general politics, they passed at a step

from the question of the Paulette to a review of all the public grievances under which their fellow-subjects were labouring. After having wrought during four successive days in this inexhaustible mine of eloquence, they at length, on the 30th June, 1648, commenced the adoption of a series of resolutions, which, by the 24th July, had amounted in number to twenty-seven, and which may be said to have laid the basis of a constitutional revolution. Amongst other things, they demanded that the offices of intendants in the various provinces should be abolished—that a fourth of the tailles should be revoked—that a chamber of justice should be established for the trial of the officers of finance for their malversations—that various guarantees should be established for securing the privileges and jurisdictions of the sovereign courts—that no subject of the king should be detained in prison during more than twenty-four hours, without being interrogated and transferred to his natural judges—that all imposts levied under ordinances not registered in parliament should be discontinued on pain of death—and that the gross amount of all imposts should be paid immediately into the treasury, without any deduction on account of advances made to the king.

Important as these resolutions were in themselves, they were still more important as the assertion, by the associated magistrates, of the right to originate laws affecting all the general interests of the commonwealth. In fact, a new power in the state had suddenly sprung into existence. It possessed a strong, and at that time an exclusive, hold on the popular favour. The authority it assumed was defined by no ascertained rules, and was limited by no established precedents or maxims. There were, therefore,

no assignable bounds to their possible usurpations. But that was an age in which the minds of men, in every part of Europe, had been rudely awakened to the extent to which the unconstitutional encroachments of popular bodies might be carried. Charles I. was at that time a prisoner in the hands of the English Parliament. Louis XIV. was a boy, unripe for an encounter with any similar antagonists. His court was distracted by hostile factions, and a ceaseless war was daily exhausting the resources of his government. The Queen-mother, therefore, resolved to spare no concessions by which the disaffected magistracy might be conciliated. D'Emery was sacrificed to their displeasure; the renewal of the Paulette on its ancient terms was offered to them; some of the grievances of which they complained were immediately redressed; and the young king appeared before them in person, to promise his assent to their other demands. In return, he stipulated only for the cessation of their combined meetings, and for their desisting from the further promulgation of arrêts, to which they ascribed the force and authority of law.

But the authors of this hasty revolution were no longer masters of the spirits whom they had summoned to their aid. They had to choose between a hazardous advance, and a still more hazardous retreat. With increasing audacity, therefore, they persevered in defying the royal power, and in requiring from all Frenchmen, implicit submission to their own. Advancing from one step to another, they adopted, on the 28th of August, 1648, an arrêt in direct conflict with a recent proclamation of the king; and ordered the prosecution of three persons for the offence of presuming to lend him money. At

that moment their debates were interrupted by shouts and discharges of cannon, announcing the great victory of Condé at Lens. During the four following days, religious festivals and public rejoicings suspended their sittings. But in those four days, the Court had arranged their measures for a coup d'état. As the Parliament retired from Notre Dame, where they had attended at a solemn thanksgiving for the triumph of the arms of France, they observed that the soldiery still stood to the posts which, in honour of that ceremonial, had been assigned to them in different quarters of the city. Under the protection of that force, one of the presidents of the Chamber "des Enquêtes," and De Broussel, the chief of the parliamentary agitators, were arrested and consigned to different prisons, while three of their colleagues were exiled to remote distances from the capital.

At the tidings of this violence, the Parisian populace were seized with a characteristic paroxysm of fury. As by some magical impulse, they at once fell into ranks, as if they had been so many bands of a well-organised army. They elected commanders, threw up barricades, and stationed garrisons at every vulnerable point of attack or defence. In less than three hours, Paris had become an entrenched camp. In the centre was the Palais de Justice, the stronghold of the Parliament; and, at the extremity, the Palais Royal, the fortress of the queen. No effectual resistance to the enraged, but well-disciplined, multitude was, however, possible. They dictated their own terms. The exiles were recalled, and the prisoners released. Peals of bells from every steeple, acclamations from every mouth, repeated salvos from twenty thousand muskets, greeted their return; and then, at the bidding of the Parliament, the people laid

aside their weapons, threw down the barricades, reopened their shops, and resumed the common business of life, as quietly as if nothing had occurred to interrupt the tranquil course of their ordinary existence.

It was, however, a short-lived triumph. The queen, her son, and Mazarin effected their escape to St. Germains; and there, by the mediation of Condé, and of Gaston Duke of Orleans, the uncle of the king, a peace was negotiated. The treaty of St. Germains was regarded by the Court with shame, and by the Parliament with exultation. But when, according to the terms of it, the royal family had resumed their residence at Paris, the four Sovereign Courts entered upon new and angry debates on the final acceptance of that arrangement. Each of them fastened on some different provisions of the treaty, and each demanded numerous and irreconcilable amendments of them. But they had now to deal with a new and a much more formidable antagonist. Condé was a great soldier, but an unskilful and impatient peacemaker. By his advice and aid, the queen-mother and the king once more retired to St. Germains, and commanded the immediate adjournment of the Parliament from Paris to Montargis. To their remonstrances against that order, they could obtain no answer, except that if their obedience to it should be any longer deferred, an army of twenty-five thousand men would immediately lay siege to the city.

War was thus declared; but never did war assume a less imposing aspect. At the Hôtel de Ville, the head-quarters of the parliamentary forces, a joyous troop of plumed and silken nobles, and a still gayer array of high-born ladies, were permitted to usurp, not only the defence of Paris, but the conduct of public affairs. The fascinated multitude welcomed

these aristocratic allies with loud applauses, and even the long robed magistrates themselves were compelled to confess and to bow to their supremacy. Those grandees had, however, plunged into rebellion on no principle at all, and from no assignable motives. Some had been seduced into it by mere idleness, — some by conceit, — others by offended self-love, — and not a few by the allurement of wanton paramours; and while Condé was drawing his veteran troops round the walls, the gallant lords and ladies within them were caballing, intriguing, dancing, and revelling with an equal contempt of their own reputation, of the common safety, and of those high political interests which had drawn their plebeian associates into this hazardous contest with their king.

The catastrophe was worthy of such beginnings. With an undissembled contempt both for his learned and for his fashionable adversaries, the conqueror of Rocroi scarcely condescended to put forth his military skill or resources against them. Nor was it necessary; for, at the first keen blast of real war, the belligerent propensities both of the Palais de Justice and of the Hôtel de Ville drooped and faded away. An onslaught by Condé, on one of their outposts at Charenton, was followed, within a month, first, by an offer to treat for peace, and then by the actual acceptance of the treaty of Ruel. It was, however, neither a dastardly nor an unwise concession. Gallant as were the spirits of many of the insurgent magistrates, their position was one from which the bravest and the wisest might have rejoiced to retire. The post which brought the tidings of the attack on Charenton, brought also the intelligence of the execution of Charles I.; and the melancholy issue of the revolt of the Parliament in England sounded as a dismal omen in the ears of the Parliament of Paris. Besieged as they then were by

the greatest warrior of the age, they had been superseded in the defence of the city, at the bidding of the fickle multitude, by a troop of holiday courtiers. Entertaining no ultimate views but such as the most loyal Frenchman might cherish and avow, they were shocked to learn that their lordly associates were far advanced in a treaty for introducing into the land as their allies, the generals and the troops of the King of Spain, who was at that time engaged in an open war with their lawful sovereign; and, to complete their distress, they were nearly at the same moment informed, that the Queen-mother had just issued letters patent for the convocation of the States General, in whose presence their own usurped authority must fade away, and their own persons shrink into insignificance and disesteem.

The treaty of Ruel was, therefore, not so much a choice as a necessity. It was, however, a great epoch. It was the close of the constitutional, and the commencement of the romantic, history of the Fronde; and such of the occurrences of that war as lie beyond it are, therefore, not within the limits of the inquiry which I have, at present, proposed to myself. Yet I am unwilling to pass over so curious a passage in the annals of France, as that which is variously called, either the second Fronde, or the War of Princes, without, at least, indicating what are the best sources from which authentic information respecting it may be derived.

The whole contest, whether constitutional or military, has recently been narrated by M. de St. Aulaire and by M. Bazin, in works entitled to no mean rank amongst those in which modern historians have emulated the skill, and surpassed the wisdom, of the great historical artists of antiquity. Of such compendious

and philosophical abridgments of the records of past ages, many have earned high admiration, and are justly entitled to it. The great authors of that class have given the most exquisite examples of the power of selecting, grouping, and harmonising events. They have drawn many graphic portraitures of human character; and they have supplied us with many luminous statements, and profound solutions of the social and political problems of former times, and with many an analysis of remote occurrences, around which, as a nucleus, the student may accumulate whatever additional knowledge his own researches may bring to the more complete illustration of them. Some of you may perhaps, however, remember how, in one of his graceful flights over the surface of things, Charles Lamb had the courage to place all such histories in *his* Index expurgatorius of "books impossible to be read;" and although the papal decrees of that most elegant of triflers may not command our absolute submission, yet the more any man descends below the surface over which he fluttered, the more, I think, will he so far agree with him, as to place such books amongst those with which it is "impossible to be satisfied." For indisputable as may be the duty, and great as may be the pleasure, of studying Guicciardini and Davila, Voltaire and Sismondi, Hume and Gibbon, who ever yet closed them without some distaste for such learned epitomes, and for the makers of them? In the dusty fields of ancient chronicles, and even in the flower-beds of some historical romances, may be gathered a more vivid, and perhaps a more just, conception of the ages which have passed away, than can be gleaned from any of those scientific and eloquent narratives. The student of the elaborate histories of the Fronde will therefore, in my

judgment, do well to cultivate the acquaintance of the great memoir writers among the Frondeurs. Such, however, is their number, that I can, at present, pause to notice a few only of the most considerable.

Foremost in importance, in variety, and in genius, and therefore foremost in fame, are the Memoirs of John Francis Paul de Gondi, Archbishop of Paris and Cardinal de Retz. It might pass for a species of impiety to say, of so eminent an ecclesiastic, that he was a debauchee, a liar, and a knave, if the cardinal himself had not taken the utmost pains to demonstrate that such were the habits, and such even the boast, of his life. He laid suicidal hands on his own character with an obliquity of moral vision unrivalled, perhaps, except by Jean Jacques Rousseau; and yet, in a letter of Rousseau himself, may be read the following estimate of the merits of his fellow suicide. "I have," he says, "read the Memoirs of De Retz from end to end. It is a Salmagundy of all things good and bad. The first volume abounds with touches of great beauty, and with many weighty reflections apropos to trifles. The other volumes are little better than so much verbiage apropos to things of great importance. But what amazes me is, to see a man of rank and of mature age—a priest, an archbishop, and a cardinal—exhibiting himself as a duellist, as living in concubinage, and, worst of all, as a deliberate hypocrite, secluding himself in a religious retirement that he may appear as an honest man in the eyes of the world, and as a rogue in the sight of his Maker."

Hard words these, but scarcely more hard than true! Nor is the explanation of this strange moral phenomenon either doubtful or recondite. Excepting only his severe and eloquent censor, De Retz was the

most eminent and zealous of all the high-priests who have at different times devoted themselves to the worship of vanity. At her shrine he was prompt to immolate everything—his friends, his country, his religion; and even his reputation for decorum, integrity, and truth. To satiate his thirst for applause on any terms, he became the great teacher and example, to his own and to future ages, of sedition reduced into a science. With all the sententious gravity of a philosopher, he instructs us how the people may be deceived, and how they may be agitated,—how advantage may be taken of the infirmities of the rulers of mankind,—and how even their virtues may be made the instruments of their destruction. Le Gendre, the terrorist, said well of the Cardinal's Memoirs, that they were a breviary of revolution. He was not, however, wholly exempt from ambition in its more vulgar forms. The first great object of his life was to be gazed at and talked about. The second was to obtain the red hat of a cardinal; and he did obtain it by a series of treacheries and falsehoods which would have been more fitly rewarded by a seat in the galleys, than by a seat in the Roman conclave. And yet, strange and contradictory as it may at first sound, De Retz is a writer from whom much valuable and even trustworthy information is to be obtained. Although no credit be due to one word he says with a view of magnifying his own importance, and although he suppresses all facts hostile to his claims to be the projector of every cabal, the chief agent in every intrigue, and the most daring adventurer in every enterprise, yet his self-portraiture, and his delineations of the great actors who trod the stage with him, bear the most vivid impress of truth in substance, however

much exaggerated or discoloured in the details. So graphic and self-consistent are his innumerable portraits, and so carefully are they wrought out in all their minutest features, that the most exalted genius could never have produced them if they had not been close copies of living originals. With all his faults, he places his reader in the very centre of that strange society, and throws a clear light on the character of every member of it, and on the nature of all the transactions in which they were engaged. The book is, besides, one of the best, as it is one of the earliest, examples of the force, the freedom, and the finesse of the French language. It has all the ease and vivacity of a sustained conversation, or rather of a story told by the most animated of conversers to a group of admiring associates. Never, indeed, was genius more perverted, but, even in its perversion, it is genius still.

Inferior in interest only to those of De Retz, La Rochefoucauld also has left to the world his memoirs of the wars of the Fronde, in which he largely participated. After a youth of strange and audacious adventures, he engaged in that controversy, partly, as it would seem, from the mere love of hazard, and partly from a guilty attachment to the Duchesse de Longueville. In her service he sported with his fortune, his reputation, and his life; and devoted his great literary powers to the single object of making Mazarin ridiculous. But, at the mature age of forty-two, he at length retired from these turbulent scenes to become the centre of the fashionable and the literary society of Paris; and, at the same time, to meditate and to write. He accordingly produced the two books on which his reputation has ever since depended, his Memoirs and his Maxims. Of his Me-

moirs, Bayle has said that, "he could not believe any lover of antiquity to be so prejudiced as to deny their superiority to those of Cæsar." His Maxims may be considered as the philosophical retrospect of the experience acquired in the calenture of his youth; and, therefore, as the most impressive of all illustrations of the guilt, the baseness, and the folly of the Fronde. "There is," says Voltaire, "in the whole book, nothing but this solitary thought — that self-love is the single motive of all our actions; but that one thought," he adds, "is presented to us under such a variety of aspects as never to lose its interest." The Maxims of La Rochefoucauld are in fact nothing else than the immature and dispersed germs of that philosophy of selfishness which ripened into the "Fable of the Bees" under the fostering care of Mandeville, and which were then crushed for ever by the giant arm of Joseph Butler.

In beautiful contrast with the Memoirs of De Retz and of La Rochefoucauld, are those of Madame de Motteville. She was one of the ladies of the household of Anne of Austria, and in that position enjoyed a broader survey of the surface of affairs during the civil wars than any other of the writers who have undertaken to describe them. Her curiosity was as active as her opportunities were ample, and though she wrote as a partisan of the royal cause, she was at least as impartial as any other of the chroniclers of those times. But she excels them all in warmth of heart and singleness of purpose, and in her abundance and variety of interesting anecdotes. She loved and admired her royal mistress cordially. She had no apparent wish to suppress or to exaggerate the truth; and she is, above all things, free

from the selfishness which De Retz avowed as the guide of his life, and La Rochefoucauld as the principle of his philosophy. Madame de Motteville was a true woman; a woman so profoundly interested in the happiness, the troubles, and the reputation of her friends, as never to waste a thought upon her own; and to that generous self-forgetfulness she is really indebted for an authority to which the narrow-souled genius of her great rivals has never been able to elevate either of them.

Yet she was not the most eminent of the women who rose to distinction amongst the contemporary writers of Memoirs of the Fronde. The Duchesse de Montpensier surpassed Madame de Motteville as much in the marvels of her life, as she fell below her in the disinterestedness of her spirit. At the close of the siege of Bourdeaux she became the popular heroine of the day. At the head of a troop of courtly damsels she fairly broke down one of the gates of Orleans; and, like another Joan of Arc, marched in triumph into the beleaguered city. Entering the Bastille while the cannon of Turenne were thundering upon its walls, she turned the guns of the fortress against that great captain, and, after repulsing him to St. Denys, rescued the shattered remains of the forces of Condé. And then, braving a Parisian mob in the height of its savage fury, she penetrated to the Hôtel de Ville, and, at the imminent hazard of her own life, saved the magistrates, the ecclesiastics, and the citizens there from the assassins by whom they were surrounded. And yet, if you read the Memoirs of this Penthiselea, you will find that, during the wars of the Fronde, and for many a year before and after, the real question depending in the wide realm of France was not,

whether the Parliament or the Queen-mother, whether Condé or Turenne, whether the French or the Spanish arms should prevail, but how a husband should be found worthy of the hand of Mademoiselle la Duchesse de Montpensier!—a question to which an ungrateful generation was never able to return any satisfactory answer.

It was, indeed, an age in which both the heroes and the heroines of French history exhibited themselves to the wondering world in characters of the most fantastic extravagance. There were, for example, to be seen, the First President and Chancellor Matthieu Molé, who, after long years of humble subserviency to the despotic Richelieu, was now rising to the most sublime heights of moral courage and of patriotic self-devotion;—and Gaston, Duke of Orleans, thrust by his rank into the foremost place of responsibility and honour, but invariably becoming sick, and taking to his bed at the near approach of danger; at once the only great speaker, and the only real coward, of the House of Bourbon;—and Turenne, all grave, decorous, and dutiful as he was, engaging in a traitorous league with Spain against his king, for love of the unhappy Duchesse de Longueville;—and the great Condé, the Napoleon of his age, year after year leading Spanish armies against his country and his sovereign, from no one conceivable motive except the mere wantonness of vindictive pride, and a puerile passion for mischievous activity;—and the Duke de Beaufort, the illegitimate grandson of Henry IV., but better known as Le Roi des Halles, at one time playing at tennis in the midst of thousands of enthusiastic Poissardes, at another rejecting, from admirers of the same class, a proffered pension of 60,000 livres; now upsetting a public supper-table, at which

a crowd of royal partisans were making merry, and then killing his own brother-in-law in a preposterous duel; but, under his continually shifting forms of extravagance, remaining still the cherished, or rather the idolised, demagogue of the proletaires of Paris; —and Broussel, who, at the age of seventy-two, for the first time attracted to himself, and never afterwards lost, a large share in the same mob-worship; —and the Duchesse de Longueville, impelled by vanity and ennui into rebellion to her king, treason to her country, and infidelity to her husband, until at length a penitential retirement at Port Royal rescued her from the intoxicating grandeurs, and cares, and pleasures of the world;—and the Queen-mother, with all the majestic composure and inflexibility of her race, triumphing in the protracted struggle with the enemies of her viceregal throne, though not equally victorious over the frailties of her own heart, and the irascibility of her own temper;—and Mazarin, twice banished, and twice returning from banishment to France, and there alien, and tortuous, and irresolute, and rapacious as he was, retaining to his latest breath an absolute dominion over the high-spirited people who, during four successive years, had exhausted against him all the quivers of ridicule, invective, and popular indignation;—and in that strange scene was also conspicuous the young Louis XIV., contemplating, with premature thoughtfulness, the events and the personages amidst which he was growing up to manhood, and from that contemplation imbibing an unmitigable hatred of the institutions, and distrust of the cause, for the advancement of which his kingdom had been so long abandoned to misrule and violence.

Yet, if the wars of the Fronde had terminated

with the treaty of Ruel, Louis XIV. might perhaps have drawn from them some deeper and more salutary lessons than these. It was till that era a contest from the character and the conduct of which much practical wisdom might have been gathered.

The Fronde commenced in the spirit of reaction against the absolute dictatorship of Richelieu. But that spirit was, at first, timid, hesitating, and narrow. Omer Talon, who, as we have seen, had persuaded himself, at the end of the fifth year of the regency, that a great and universal calm had at length been established, had the integrity to acknowledge that the judicial company of which he was so great an ornament, were provoked into the disturbance of that calm by no more elevated motive than the desire to perpetuate their own offices in their own families. If Anne of Austria had not proposed to abolish the Paulette, the Parliament would not have roused the people of Paris and of France to a rebellion against her. It is, however, a very curious and instructive fact, that the other contemporary historians of the Fronde (De Retz among the number), carefully concealed this important truth. It lay unheeded in the uninviting pages of Talon, and unnoticed by subsequent writers, until very recent students, by referring to the original journals of the Parliament, brought to light this dishonest misquotation of them.

When, however, though from motives thus mercenary, the signal of opposition to the government had been given by the combination against it of the four sovereign courts of Paris, a great, though incongruous, multitude flocked to the standard of revolt. Among them the foremost and the loudest were, of course, those who were enduring palpable wrongs, and smarting beneath real and weighty grievances.

These were the Roturiers who were overwhelmed by the intolerable burdens which the protracted war with the House of Austria and the prodigality of the court had laid upon them. Then followed the Noblesse, resenting the overthrow of their ancient predominance; and the citizens of the more considerable towns of France lamenting the subversion of their municipal privileges; and to them were added a multitude of the Tiers Etat, who regretted the loss of the franchises which they and their fathers had enjoyed in the States General and in the election of deputies to serve in that assembly. Not a few also swelled the clamour with imaginations heated by the example so lately given in England, of a successful resistance to the royal authority. Classical students again were there with bewitching pictures, then first made universally known, of the Athenian and Roman liberties. And there were not wanting statesmen of large views, who, partaking in the progress of thought by which that age was distinguished, had learnt, and were desirous to teach, that national freedom can never pass out of a name into a reality, until it shall have been guaranteed, not by positive laws merely, but by the unassailable bulwarks of free popular institutions. On every side was, therefore, heard the cry of long suppressed opinions, of newly awakened passions, of secular interests, and of religious convictions. On every side was also invoked the sympathy and the support of the power which had so suddenly, but so resolutely, ventured to confront the throne, and to challenge its absolute supremacy.

The combined courts were thus hurried onward by an irresistible external influence into a revolt aiming at nothing less than the creation of a new system, and of new principles of government. Nor may we

condemn with much severity this attempted usurpation. Richelieu and Mazarin had long governed France with an utter oblivion of the interests of the great body of the French people. The policy common to them both was nothing more than the depression of the House of Austria, in order that the House of Bourbon might be elevated to a power which should be at once supreme abroad, and absolute at home. I will not venture to deny that an enlightened and far-sighted patriotism might, at that time, have pursued these objects with all the energy of the first cardinal, and all the subtlety of the other. But to pursue them, as they did, not as a means, but as an end; not as the means of rendering France prosperous, but as an end in which the rulers of France were to find the grandeur and the glory of their race, was as narrow and as unworthy a consummation as was ever proposed to themselves by men of genius in the government of a mighty nation. The antagonists of such a system may well expect pardon for some violations of law and even of justice in their efforts for the subversion of it.

Nor was the revolt of the associated magistrates conducted in a feeble or temporising spirit. Their arrêt, or twenty-seven articles, of the 30th June, 1648, amounted to nothing less than the imposition on the Crown of a new charter of government. Their traditional right of remonstrance against royal enactments was alleged by them merely as a shadow and a pretext. The substantial attempt and purpose was to wrest altogether from the king the powers of legislation, of arbitrary taxation, and of arbitrary imprisonments. "Henceforth," so ran the arrêt, "there shall be imposed no taxes except in virtue of edicts and declarations well and duly verified by the sovereign courts with full liberty of suffrage. No

subject of the king," it is added, "of whatever quality or condition, may be kept in prison for more than twenty-four hours, without being interrogated according to the ordinances, and transferred to his natural judge." And to secure to themselves the permanent and undivided power of watching over the execution of these resolves, the same arrêt claimed for the sovereign courts a veto on the creation of any new offices which might supersede or emulate their own.

Nor were these the pretensions of wordy and irresolute agitators only. To carry them into effect, the magistrates employed, if they did not promote, the insurrection and the barricades of Paris. They levied troops, appointed generals, raised funds for the conduct of the war, closed the gates of Paris against the king, and negotiated a federative union with all the cities and parliaments of France; nor did they at last lay down their arms until both at St. Germains and at Ruel they had obtained from the king treaties which were, at least, supposed to affirm the entire substance of their insurrectionary demands. And yet, in fact, not one effective step was made in the wars of the Fronde towards the conquest of constitutional freedom; but, on the contrary, that struggle had the effect of delivering over the kingdom to a power more absolute and irresponsible than had ever before exercised the supreme authority in France. It remains to inquire, What were the causes, and what the explanation, of this disappointment?

First, then, the claims of the associated magistrates were, in strictness of law, a mere usurpation. The four Sovereign Courts of Paris were so many judicial tribunals, but throughout these proceedings they were acting in direct and unequivocal defiance of the law which it was their appropriate duty to enforce. Even if the right of insurrection could be

allowed to possess all the sanctity ascribed to it in a later age, it may be supposed that neither Danton, nor Marat himself, would have held the exercise of it sacred except when undertaken by the sovereign people. Those eminent doctors of the science of revolution would probably have repudiated, as unjustifiable, a rebellion planned and conducted by a convention of long robed councillors and presidents à mortier. This incongruity between the appropriate office and the actual employment of the Parisian magistracy threw a constant discredit on their enterprises, and embarrassed all their revolutionary movements.

Secondly. Not only were the characters of judge and demagogue inherently incompatible, but the councillors of the Parliament laboured under many accidental and personal disqualifications for the conduct of the popular cause. In that as in every other era of French history, the great questions and real difficulties of the government were financial. Richelieu and Mazarin had crushed the whole rural population beneath intolerable imposts. The tailles, the corvées, and the gabelle, had reduced them to the last extremities of want and misery. "Ten years have now elapsed," said Talon in one of his speeches to Louis XIV., "since the country was absolutely ruined, since the peasants were reduced to sleep on the straw, and all their goods seized in satisfaction of the demands of the treasury. To maintain the luxury of Paris, millions of unoffending people are compelled to live on bread made of bran and oats. They have no protection except in their utter wretchedness. Their souls alone are left to them, and that only because *they* cannot be put up to auction." Never was indignation more eloquent or more just. Yet the very

magistrates, in whose name Talon thus spoke, were at that very moment contending, with still greater zeal, and with all the characteristic ingenuity of their profession, against the single equitable tax which the court had ever proposed to establish. It was the octroi, or duty, on provisions brought into Paris and the other great cities; and unmeasured were the invectives with which, in the very midst of the general ruin, the magistrates denounced the injustice of taxing any articles consumed by themselves and their wealthy fellow-citizens. No men could be more ignorant of the great, though melancholy, science of taxation; none more heedless of maintaining even the semblance of disinterestedness; and none, therefore, could be less qualified for the critical office of tribunes of the people.

Thirdly. Though great *municipal* lawyers, the associated magistrates had no proficiency even in the elements of *constitutional* law. On the 24th of October, 1648, the Crown had assented to what may be called their habeas corpus law. On the 18th January, 1650, that is, less than fifteen months afterwards, that law was flagrantly violated in the persons of the Dukes of Condé, Conti, and Longueville. But when the mother of Condé invoked the recent enactment in favour of her son, the Parliament refused to interfere, alleging that, as no member of the royal house was amenable to their authority, so neither could any such person be entitled to their protection. They might have alleged, with much greater truth, that the illegal imprisonment of the princes had been secretly sanctioned by themselves. A body thus ignorant or heedless of the elementary truth, that the infringement of the rights of any one member of society, however low or however high, is an injury to all the rest, were but

ill-prepared to assume the character of constitutional vindicators of the national liberties.

Fourthly. It is seldom given to individual men to emancipate their minds from bondage to the prejudices of their profession. To professional assemblages that freedom of mind is always unknown and unattainable. Whether they deliberated on the affairs of the commonwealth, or projected political measures, or made war, or entered into treaties, the councillors of the Parliament still wrapped themselves up in their long robes, their legal fictions, and their judicial subtleties. Never were a party in the state so destitute of the power of taking the straight path towards their end, or of using simple words to express their real meaning. For example, the twenty-seven articles of their confederation of the 30th June, 1648; the treaty of St. Germain of September, in the same year; and the treaty of Ruel of March, 1649, form the three pivots of their whole policy. And yet it may well be doubted, whether those great constitutional acts, when read and collated together, would, at this day, convey to any man, uninformed of the history of those times, any definite meaning whatever. Thus, the great principle that no prisoner should be confined during twenty-four hours without being interrogated and transferred to his natural judges, though plainly enough stated in the articles of June, 1648, is laid down in the treaty of St. Germain in words selected by the Parliament themselves, which words are as follows:—"No subject of the king shall hereafter be prosecuted as a criminal, except according to the forms prescribed by the laws and ordinances of the kingdom; and the ordinance of king Louis XI., of October, 1467, shall be observed according to its form and tenor." The lawyers who

put together these words might see in them a perfect assent to their corresponding article of June, 1648, and a perfect security for the liberty of the subject. For they were so many hierophants who could not abide a plain-spoken oracle. They preferred a riddle, of which the key was in their own keeping, to any words which had the inconvenience of being universally intelligible. But never yet was a free constitution erected on legal enigmas, or built up by the labours of schoolmen. They who would govern the world must condescend to make use of the world's language. The articles of June, 1648, were plain enough, but they were invalid except in so far as they were ratified by the treaties. Now the treaty of St. Germain said nothing distinctly, and the treaty of Ruel said absolutely nothing at all, respecting the great constitutional questions which those articles had been designed to regulate.

Fifthly. If the pretensions of the Parliament had been really successful, the effect must have been to supersede the authority of the States General, and to break up the kingdom of France into a system of confederated states or governments, as numerous as the sovereign courts or parliaments of the realm. All good Frenchmen deprecated such a result; and the obvious tendency of the measures of the associated magistrates to produce it, greatly impaired their influence with that great but tranquil majority, who will always prefer the permanent welfare of their country, to the triumph of the agitators of the passing day.

Sixthly. There was also in France, at that time, a multitude of persons who contemplated with alarm the seeming propensity of the French Parliament to imitate the revolutionary example of the Parliament

of England. The monarchy of a thousand years was still dear and venerable to most of those who had grown up beneath its shelter, and the supposed enemies of it were regarded by them with alarm and jealousy.

Seventhly. To men accustomed to reflect, the success of the Parliament held out the unwelcome prospect of the introduction of a polity never before heard of in the world, and hardly to be reconciled with the maxims which had been received amongst men as fundamental, on the subject of civil government. It would have been a fusion of all legislative, administrative, and judicial powers; a combination of them all, in the hands of men trained to the study and practice of the law, and forming a kind of hereditary caste, neither selected by the people, nor chosen from among the ancient aristocracy, nor appointed by the Crown. An oligarchy in any form was sufficiently formidable to Frenchmen; but, from an oligarchy of lawyers, they could anticipate nothing which any class of society could regard, either with respect, or confidence, or attachment.

Eighthly. The failure of the associated magistracy to accomplish the purposes of their union, is also to be ascribed to the coincidence of the religious with the political division of parties. The Jansenists were Parliamentarians, and the Jesuits Royalists. As in England, the Independents and the Episcopalians selected their positions in the state according to their relations to the Church, so in France, the innovators in the ecclesiastical society were also promoters of changes in the commonwealth. And hence it happened, that all the more zealous adherents of sacerdotal power were, in either country, the devoted supporters of the monarchical authority. It was in

no small degree by their aid; that Louis XIV. finally triumphed over both the first and the second Frondeurs, and to these early recollections must be ascribed no small part of the animosity with which, at a later period, he regarded and persecuted the family of Arnauld, and the whole body of their proselytes at Port Royal.

Ninthly. But of all the causes which contributed to neutralise and defeat the efforts of the Fronde to reform the French government, none was so effectual as the alliance into which the Frondeurs were forced with their aristocratic associates, and especially with the family of Condé. That association rapidly destroyed whatever was popular, and generous, and patriotic, in the movement of the Reformers. It rendered the cause and the interests of the people at large subservient to the selfish objects of the Noblesse. They were the too faithful successors and representatives of the old feudal seigneurs. In their hands, the contest wholly changed its character and its purposes. It degenerated from a high principle into a paltry fashion. It was rendered ludicrous by the follies of the courtly ladies, who assumed so conspicuous a share in the direction of it, and hateful by the traitorous alliance into which the Frondeurs were drawn with the foreign enemies and invaders of the kingdom.

And, finally, while France was desolated by this civil war, and was witnessing the decline of the influence of the authors of it, the young king was growing up to manhood, adorned with every kingly grace, and attracting universal admiration by his real, and still more by his supposed, talents and capacity for government. So rapid and complete was the growth of his personal authority, that, before he had completed his twentieth year, the astonished, and now subdued,

Parliament saw him appear in his riding-dress among them, to command their acceptance of his edicts, in language and in a tone which Commodus would not have hazarded with his abject senators. The Fronde had been a reaction against the dictatorship of Richelieu. The reign of Louis XIV. was a still more complete and protracted reaction against the ill-conceived and ill-conducted efforts of the Fronde, to substitute a free for an absolute government in France.

LECTURE XXII.

ON THE ABSOLUTE MONARCHY AS ADMINISTERED BY COLBERT AND LOUVOIS.

THE administration of Cardinal Mazarin, so far as it has a conspicuous place in the history of the civil government of France, begins and closes with the wars of the Fronde. His name, once so sacred to obloquy, that a Mazarinade and a satirical libel had become convertible terms in the French language, has, since his death, and especially of late years, acquired a perpetually increasing lustre. For in that enthusiastic land there is no offence which will not be pardoned, no applause which will not be given, to any one whose fortune it has been to augment the sum of what is there considered as the national glory. And although Mazarin long protracted an unnecessary war,—though he plunged the state into an abyss of financial difficulties —though in the midst of the public distress, he accumulated a fortune which would be in-

adequately represented at the present day by sixteen millions of pounds sterling—though his government was signalised by no one measure of legislative or administrative wisdom—though he was insincere and timid, and (to the utmost of his faint daring) an oppressor,—yet we cannot deny him the praise of having adopted both the foreign and domestic policy of Richelieu in the true spirit of that unscrupulous dictator. In the wars of the Fronde he played the patrician and the plebeian orders against each other to the common depression of them both; and, by the treaty of the Pyrenees he accomplished that matrimonial alliance, which laid the basis of the long subjection of the monarchy of Spain to the crown of France. At length, on the 9th of March 1661, he died, leaving in the hands of the youthful Louis XIV. a power more absolute than had ever been enjoyed by any of the successors of Charlemagne, with the not unreasonable prospect of transmitting to his own successors a dominion embracing many of the fairer provinces of the Carlovingian empire. Early on the morning of the following day, the king having assembled his council, addressed them in the following words: "I have called you together to say, that though hitherto I have been well satisfied that my government should be conducted by the late cardinal, I intend henceforward to govern in my own person. You will assist me with your advice whenever I shall demand it." From that hour to his last, Louis XIV. appeared to the world at large, and even to himself, to be the supreme, if not the sole, administrator of the affairs of his kingdom.

He had many royal qualities—a noble presence—manners full of grace and dignity—an elocution at once majestic and seductive—unwearied assiduity in business—a luminous understanding—an instinctive

taste for whatever is magnificent in thought or action—and a genuine zeal for the welfare of his people. But for the high office of moulding and conducting the policy of the greatest of the nations of the civilised world, he wanted three indispensable gifts—an education so liberal as to have revealed to him the real interests and resources of his kingdom—the faculty by which a true statesman, in the silence of all established precedents, originates measures adapted to the innovations, whether progressive or immediate, of his times—and that dominion over passion and appetite which is the one essential condition of all true mental independence. Without such knowledge, such invention, and such self-control, Louis could not really think, and, therefore, could not really act, for himself.

It was consequently inevitable that the office of thinking and of acting for him should be devolved on some minister; and Jean Baptiste Colbert was, ere long, called to the discharge of that arduous duty. Colbert was the son of a merchant of Rheims, and had held the place of intendant in the household of Mazarin. In that employment he had earned the reputation of great skill and diligence in managing the colossal fortune of his master, and in detecting the frauds by which the officers of the royal revenue had enriched themselves at the public expense. His own integrity was universally acknowledged, but the respect commanded by his talents and his virtue was not a willing nor an affectionate tribute. No man, indeed, could be more unpopular; for no man was more severe, morose, and repulsive, even towards those whom he most desired to conciliate. Hostile as such an origin, such pursuits, and such a demeanour might be to his success with others, it would have been impossible for him to have com-

bined together a greater number of powerful recommendations than these to the favour of the young king. Supported by no family connections, or personal attachments, and inured to an obscure and useful drudgery, Colbert seemed of all men the best qualified to render to Louis those humble, but effective, services which, while they would relieve himself from toils incompatible with his kingly state and with his youthful enjoyments, would still leave to him the glory of governing, or of seeming to govern, his vast hereditary possessions. At first, therefore, Colbert was privately consulted by his sovereign on some urgent fiscal questions—then employed in prosecuting Fouquet, the superintendant of finance, whose peculations he had brought to light—then admitted to a seat in the royal council—then intrusted with the subordinate function of intendant of finance—then appointed to superintend the works and buildings of the king—then elevated to the post of comptroller-general—and, finally, promoted to the office of secretary of state for the marine and the colonies. During each successive step of this upward progress, the harsh and inflexible minister made many enemies and few friends. Yet he was seldom or never betrayed into the fault of an arrogant self-importance. It was, on the contrary, his habit to depreciate his own power and influence—a habit in which he was not improbably sincere, as he certainly was discreet. He habitually spoke and wrote of himself as a mere subaltern, and as unable either to decide on any measure, or to confer any place or advantage except by the express command of his royal master. Charmed with a servant so upright, painstaking, and unobtrusive, and so destitute of political or domestic alliances, the king could not, or

would not, perceive that this lowly dependant was, in reality, becoming his indispensable ruler. Read the instructions of Louis to the Dauphin, and you will conclude that every material act of his government was dictated by himself, and executed by Colbert. Read the authentic documents of that age, and you will be convinced that every measure which Louis dictated to Colbert, had first been suggested by Colbert to Louis. The power of the magnificent Richelieu was, in effect, revived in the unostentatious Colbert, with the difference that, while Louis XIII. had retreated into obscurity, and had been consigned to his confessor and to his oratory, that way might be made for the haughty cardinal, Louis XIV., both in the cabinet, in the field, on the throne, and in every princely pageant, assumed the imposing majesty of an autocratic sovereign, in whose presence all inferior dignitaries appeared but as so many dependent satellites. The theatrical exhibition was altogether changed; but the plot and characters of the drama were scarcely altered.

Dropping, then, the fiction which ascribes the authorship of all royal acts to the monarch in whose name they are done, I shall consider the reign of Louis XIV., from 1661 to 1672, as really constituting the administration of Jean Baptiste Colbert.

A Protectionist in England and a Colbertiste in France are the same. Yet, in the war against free trade, our neighbours have inscribed on their banners a *nom de guerre* of much greater force and precision than our own. Their Colbert is the very Newton or Linnæus of the science of commercial restriction. The civil government of their country, as administered by him, was a series of crucial experiments on the soundness of the doctrines which that science

inculcates. They were tried on the shipping and navigation of France—on her corn trade—on the export of coin—on her foreign commerce—and on her domestic manufactures. Asserting the broad principle that a people labouring under fiscal burdens of unrivalled magnitude, could prosper only by such laws, protecting and prohibitory, as would secure to national products a preference in the home market over the similar products of foreign countries, the great economist of that age brought all his large experience, all his preternatural diligence, and all his unlimited power, to animate and sustain the industry of France by protective legislation. What were the nature and what the results of his experiments?

First, then, with regard to the shipping and navigation of France. As early as the 13th century, the people of Holland and Zealand, an amphibious, hardy, and frugal race, had engrossed the cod and herring fisheries, and were able to build and to navigate vessels on terms with which no other nation could successfully compete. They became the maritime carriers of Europe. They triumphed over the commercial jealousy of England, and the restrictive laws of Edward IV. They triumphed still more completely over the tyranny and persecution of Spain, and, while struggling for existence against the victorious arms of Alva and of Alexander Farnese, they rapidly extended their commerce over the eastern and western possessions of Philip II., until at length the treaty of Westphalia guaranteed to them Java and the Moluccas, with all their factories in Ceylon and the continent of India, and the exclusive enjoyment of the spice trade. Such was at that time their prosperity, that, about two years before the death of

Mazarin, they possessed between 15,000 and 16,000 sea-going vessels, while France could number at the most from 500 to 600.

To destroy this humiliating superiority, a series of edicts were promulgated by Fouquet, the then superintendant of finance, imposing a duty of fifty sous per ton on every foreign ship entering or quitting any French port. During several successive years the Dutch ambassador at Paris exhausted all the resources of diplomatic skill and eloquence in a series of importunate remonstrances against this impost. He might as well have expostulated with the tides against their assaults on the dykes of his native land. Colbert remained inexorable; and, with no substantial change, the discriminating tonnage duty continued in force till long after the end of his administration.

These fiscal hostilities with the Dutch were nearly coincident in point of time with our own Navigation Act, and were far less stringent. Now Adam Smith has applauded the policy of our forefathers in thus effecting the transfer to this country of much of the maritime power of Holland, and has taught that, in order to promote the higher interests of our national strength and safety, the pecuniary sacrifice involved in the compulsory employment of our own more costly shipping was wisely incurred. If in deference to the authority, or to the reasoning, of Adam Smith, we may conclude Cromwell to have been right, with what consistency can we also conclude that Colbert was wrong?

The two opinions, however apparently in conflict with each other, may, perhaps, be reconciled by observing, first, that the mere pecuniary sacrifice made by England was soon and effectually repaid by the growth of an English commercial navy, far surpassing that of

our Dutch rivals; whereas in France, the Dutch, after the restrictive law against their shipping, still retained the greater part of the French carrying trade; so that the French tonnage duty produced little or no other direct result than that of enhancing the freight of all sea-borne goods. Secondly; the inestimable advantage of national safety, which appeared to Adam Smith to apologise for the unthriftiness of our own law, was not in question in France, and, therefore, did not afford a corresponding defence for the mercantile disadvantages to which the French people were subjected by their attempted disuse of the best and cheapest maritime conveyances. And, thirdly, to England, in the time of the Commonwealth, the friendship or the enmity of Holland seemed to promise or to menace but little; whereas to France the amicable relations which she had maintained with the United Provinces for the last preceding eighty years, were of inappreciable value. Yet those relations were suspended by the French tonnage law, and not long after gave place altogether to the wars which, during half a century, consigned both France and Holland to a succession of overwhelming sufferings. In a word, by the abandonment of the great mercantile principle, that the cheapest service is the best, Cromwell reaped great gain and little loss, Colbert reaped great loss and little gain.

Secondly. The trade in corn was subjected by Colbert to experiments of yet more serious importance.

Until the reign of Charles V., France had ever enjoyed a perfect freedom of exporting corn to all other countries. After that period, the right was occasionally suspended by royal ordinances. But Francis I. and Henry IV., and even Louis XIV., under the administration of Mazarin, had fully and

emphatically re-established it. In the year 1661, however, France was afflicted with a scarcity which might almost be described as a famine, and, after waging an ineffectual war against it by the usual methods of forbidding accumulations of grain in private hands, and fixing a maximum price of corn, Colbert retained in his mind an indelible impression of the horrors of that fatal season. To prevent their recurrence, he obtained, towards the close of every future harvest, official returns of its probable productiveness. If the crops had been plentiful, he authorised the free exportation of corn for a year, or for a few months, or weeks, as he judged best. If the supply did not seem to him abundantly adequate to the wants of the people, he imposed a *temporary* export duty of greater or less amount. If he saw cause to anticipate a deficiency, he forbade the exportation altogether.

No man, therefore, could safely engage in the growth of corn in France for sale in any other country; for, however high the prices in the foreign markets might eventually be, as compared with the prices in the French markets, it depended entirely on the future decision of Colbert whether the owners of it should, or should not, have the power of availing themselves of that advantage. The results of course were, first, that the export of grain from France ceased altogether; secondly, that all the inferior soils were thrown out of cultivation, the superior soils alone being brought under tillage; and, thirdly, that there was a constant risk, and not seldom an actual production, of scarcity, and even of famine. Except in extreme exigencies of that kind, corn could never be sold at any considerable profit to the agriculturist. He was, therefore, condemned to habitual poverty,

and his inability to purchase manufactured goods, deprived the producers of them of their most important customers. Such, at least, are the consequences which our own economical theories would ascribe to such an interference of the government with the natural course of the corn trade. How far are we able, from any direct evidence, to verify or to disprove those anticipations?

They might be verified from the many still extant reports addressed to Colbert by the Intendants of the various provinces of France, and especially by the Intendants of Gascony, Poitou, and Dauphiné. But we have a memoir, transmitted by the minister himself to the king in the year 1681, in which the great author of this system thus sums up the result of it:— "The most important fact of all," he says, "and that which demands the greatest reflection, is the excessive misery of the people. It is announced in all the letters which reach us from the provinces, whoever may be the writers of them, whether intendants, receivers general, or even bishops." Seventeen years later, Marshal Vauban, whose public spirit was not inferior to his military science, drew up his celebrated account of the state of France, in which he declared that a tenth part of the whole population were reduced to pauperism; that five other tenth parts of it were so poor as to be unable to contribute anything to the relief of the destitute; that three other tenth parts were grievously straitened in their circumstances, and oppressed by debt; and that, in the only remaining tenth part, there were not ten thousand families in perfectly easy circumstances. That Colbert sincerely desired, and ardently pursued, the welfare of the kingdom which he governed, no one has ever questioned. But it may well be doubted whether

any degree of apathy or negligence was ever so fatal in its results, as was his ceaseless solicitude to interfere in everything, and to manage everything. Happy would it have been for France if her indefatigable minister had learnt, like an eminent statesman of later times, to divide his official business into three equal parts, of which the first was not worth the doing, the second did itself, and the third was quite enough for any man to attempt.

Thirdly. Regarding the trade in gold and silver money, Colbert, adopting the opinions of his age, proclaimed and acted on the maxim, that the wealth of a nation is to be measured, at any given moment, by the quantity of such coin which it may happen to possess. It is, I think, no less a person than Voltaire who extols his wisdom in thus preferring the accumulation of imperishable bullion to the exchange of it for articles which must, sooner or later, *wear out*. The less scientific merchants of his day represented to Colbert that the rigour with which he prevented or punished the exportation of the precious metals was rendering them of less value in France than in other countries; and added that, if the transit of them were unfettered, gold would always be attracted to France from every part of the world in which it bore a lower value. The universal manager of all the affairs of the whole realm had the honesty to record his inability to understand the meaning of this remonstrance; and then, assuming that it had no meaning, he persisted in devoting the whole influence of the government to the hopeful project of causing French produce to be exchanged in all other parts of the world for gold and silver in preference to every other return. Fortunately, the common sense of the merchants was too active for the Laputan science of

the statesman. Had it been otherwise, France would have acquired a vast mass of gold and silver, as useless in her coffers as in its native mines, at the expense of bringing to a close all her commercial intercourse with the other nations of the world, to whom she would have sold everything, but of whom she would have bought nothing.

Fourthly. To promote that commercial intercourse was, however, the great object of the policy of Colbert. Why, he inquired, should not France participate in the treasures which England and Holland are gathering as each tide floats into their ports vessels from every quarter of the navigable globe? The answer was at hand. The trade of France languished because it was not adequately encouraged by the French government. True, indeed, royal charters had been given to three successive companies trading to the East. But, contenting himself by conferring on them a corporate character, the king had omitted to supply them with corporate funds. Let that omission be remedied; let a new French East India Company be instituted, with all the aids and all the protection which the Crown can bestow, and Havre and Bourdeaux shall soon eclipse the mercantile splendour of Rotterdam and Bristol. So reasoned, or so predicted, Colbert; and, at his suggestion, Louis XIV. granted to the new association all that royalty can grant:—the power of making conquests,—dominion over them when made,—exclusive privileges of every known extent and variety,—bounties on all their exports and imports,—a code of laws,—an ecclesiastical establishment,—and even the right of tolerating any heathens, heretics, and infidels, with whom it might be convenient for them to enter into commercial relations. The royal

heralds contributed an escutcheon crowded with palm and olive trees, and encircled by the legend *Florebo quocunque ferar.* Artists of another class circulated such delineations of Madagascar (the seat of the projected government) as might best tempt a Picard or Languedocian to exchange his cold, or his arid, home for that earthly paradise. Of the required capital of fifteen millions, Louis himself subscribed three. All aspirants for court favour were encouraged, if not required, to imitate the example. Public defaulters were allowed to liquidate their debts to the treasury by taking shares. Even in the great chamber of the Parliament the chancellor appeared as a suitor to the judges for assistance to this great national undertaking; and those learned persons had to make their reluctant choice between a hazardous speculation and the displeasure of Versailles.

Never was a commercial project so dandled into life by nurses of such high degree, and never were such cares more ineffectual. Before ten years had elapsed the company had become irretrievably bankrupt; and the king assumed the possession and control of their establishments, on the hard condition of paying off their debts.

Nor was this the only attempt made by Colbert to emulate the achievements of the Dutch and English merchants. In North and Central America, in the West Indies and Africa, and in the Levant, he assigned to three mercantile corporations as many distinct fields in which they were to make the fleurs de lys the emblem of successful trade and of maritime greatness. Nothing was withholden from any of them which the Crown could give;—neither privileges — nor monopolies — nor bounties — nor ex-

emptions—nor sovereign powers. Yet the author of these schemes lived long enough to witness the failure of them all, and long enough (as it would seem) to discover that royal patronage was a motive-power utterly unable to compete with the energy of individual enterprise.

Still it remained for Colbert to try whether the trade of France might not thrive on the depression, and at the expense, of the trade of all the neighbouring states; and that experiment was commenced in the year 1667, by the enactment of such import duties as would virtually prevent the importation of the cloths and other wrought goods of England and of the United Provinces. The new tariff was to deprive the Dutch of a market indispensable to some of the chief branches of their domestic industry; but (so, at least, reasoned the great patron of commerce) it would transfer to the capitalists and workmen of France all the profits and all the wages which their neighbours had been accustomed to earn in the markets of that country. He fell into the common mistake of not looking at the subject in that point of view from which it would be regarded by his antagonists. By imposing a high discriminating duty on French wines in favour of the wines of Germany, Holland had in her hands the means of an effective retaliation; and, after four years had been consumed in unprofitable diplomatic remonstrances, those reprisals were at length made by the States General in the winter of 1670. For thus imitating his own example, and for thus presuming to act on his own principles, Louis, at the suggestion, or at least with the full concurrence, of Colbert, punished the United Provinces by an invasion at the head of 130,000 men, under the immediate command of Condé and

Turenne, of Luxembourg and Vauban. By terror and by corruption the gates of all the cities of Holland were at once thrown open at his approach; and the passage of the Rhine was defended against him just so far as was necessary to give some deceptive colour to the preposterous eulogies which, on the ground of that operation, exalted the courtly Louis to the level of the mighty Julius. Deputies suing for peace arrived from the terrified States at the camp of the invader. Their proposals were rejected with arrogance and insult; and the victorious king was not ashamed to require, that the rulers of the Seven Provinces should annually transmit to him a medal surrounded by a legend, in which was to be made the acknowledgment that the Dutch people held their liberties of him, and at his pleasure. The insult sunk deeply into their hearts. In a phrenzy of popular madness they massacred John and Cornelius de Witt as faithless to their native land, and as partisans of their hated enemy. The government passed into the hands of William, Prince of Orange, who, after a war of six years, at length concluded with Louis, in August, 1678, the treaty of Nimeguen. By that treaty, France abandoned the original ground of the quarrel. Her tariff of 1667 was revoked, and either country conceded to the other a full liberty of trade, unimpeded by the grant of any privileges or bounties in which the citizens of both should not equally participate. From this iniquitous contest, therefore, Colbert and his master acquired no real commercial advantage, nor any just military fame. It laid the basis of a costly and humiliating warfare of forty years' continuance; but, on the other hand, it served as an apology for striking some ostentatious medals — for erecting some

arrogant statues—and for elevating a splendid triumphal arch at the northern gates of Paris.

Fifthly. To his other cares for the mercantile greatness of France, Colbert added an extreme solicitude to guide, or rather to force, the labour of her artisans into the most profitable channels.

In the 10th and three following centuries, commercial fraternities had been formed in most of the great cities of that kingdom (as of the rest of Europe), for the defence of the handicraftsmen against their feudal lords. When those Guilds had effectually repelled oppression from themselves, they began to practise it on others. They were the Communists of that generation, and their history might teach an useful lesson to the Socialists of our own. Their tyranny was directed against all the private artisans who would not, or who could not, join their societies. In Charles V., and in Charles VI., those artisans sought and found defenders against the persecutions of the incorporated brotherhoods. But when Louis XI. invoked the aid of those companies in his struggle against the seigneurs, he was in his turn compelled to support them in their contest with the independent workmen. Thenceforward their oppressions knew no limit. No man could lawfully carry on his trade unless he became a freeman of one of their incorporations. No man could obtain that freedom except by the payment of admission fees, of a great but arbitrary amount. And before any one could be allowed so to qualify himself, he was required to produce to the guild a specimen of his skill, which *they* should acknowledge to be a *chef d'œuvre*. To many a candidate it was also a matter of extreme difficulty to ascertain what was the guild into which his particular art or craft would authorise him to enter. For

those companies were exceedingly numerous, and were engaged in ceaseless and acrimonious disputes with each other, as to the precise limits of their respective functions. To determine those knotty questions, the tavern-keepers went to law with the bakers, and the fruiterers with the grocers; and a protracted contest before the courts was necessary to determine the precise point at which the appropriate office of the shoemaker gave place to that of the cobbler. It is with an admiration, not unmixed with awe, that we celebrate the venerable length of years which our own suits in Chancery occasionally attain, but they must be numbered amongst ephemeral litigations, when brought into contrast with the ante-diluvian longevity of some of the judicial controversies between the commercial brotherhoods of France. Thus, the tailors commenced in 1530 an action against the old-clothes-men, which expired in the year 1776, in the 246th year of its age; though not till it had given birth (says M. Clement) to between 20,000 and 30,000 preliminary decrees. And thus, also, in the year 1509, the poulterers commenced a suit against the rôtisseurs, to determine whether, within their privilege of selling rôtis, the defendants were entitled to sell roasted game and poultry. The Palais de Justice decided, in 1628, that is, in the 120th year of the discussion, that no rôtisseur might supply the meat required at any marriage or other festival, unless it were celebrated under his own roof; but that within those domestic precincts, he might sell to any customer "trois plats de viande bouillie, et trois de fricassée;" a judgment which, though it left the main point unsettled, would have done honour to the Court of Barataria, under the presidency of that illustrious

judge who has rendered its decisions for ever memorable.

From the time of Louis XI. to that of Louis XIV., the general tendency of the legislation of the kings of France had been to relax the fetters by which the monopoly of the incorporated guilds thus impeded the industry of all other French manufacturers. The only material exception occurred in the reign of Henry IV., who, in deference to the advice of the Notables, assembled at Rouen in 1597, reversed the policy of his immediate predecessors, and restored the companies to their former power. But, in that assembly, the interests and the votes of a large number of rich merchants and master workmen prevailed over their colleagues. In the States General of 1614, on the contrary, where the public opinion of the whole kingdom was freely expressed, these restrictions were condemned as an intolerable grievance.

In Colbert, however, they found a patron of unrivalled authority and zeal. He observed that the relaxation of them which had been practically established, had produced the effect of bringing into the market many manufactured articles, which fell far below the highest attainable standard of excellence. But Colbert's object was to render the cloths, and tapestry, and glass, and silk of France more than equal, in value and in price, to those of England, Flanders, and Italy. To accomplish this design, he promulgated no less than forty-four edicts, or royal regulations, to determine how those articles should be fabricated. The general character of this singular code may be inferred from the following specimens:—

First. In August, 1666, an edict appeared, reciting, that the serge makers of Aumale had, during some years, had "an entire liberty of determining, ac-

cording to their own caprice," the length and breadth of their cloths, and that, on account of the consequent faults in those articles, the sale of them had greatly diminished. To remedy this evil, it was enacted that the serge makers of the place should be formed into a trading company, enjoying the usual privileges for controlling all workmen in that business.

Secondly. Twelve months later, Colbert promulgated another edict, reciting that the goods produced by the workers in gold, in silver, in silk, in wool, in thread, in dyeing and in bleaching, were not of the requisite quality; and, therefore, laying down rules for the guidance of them all, in each of their various operations. These rules, in a single case, that of the dyers, comprised no less than 317 distinct articles.

Thirdly. There was a corporation of united barbers, wig-makers, and bathing-house keepers. For their better conduct, Colbert directed that the basins hung out at their shop-windows should always be white, to distinguish them from the surgeons' basins, which were always to be yellow. The barbier perruquiers, and they alone, might sell hair, excepting (added the provident lawgiver) any case in which any person may bring his own hair for sale to any wig-maker's shop.

Fourthly. By another enactment, it was forbidden to any master workman to keep more than a single apprentice.

Fifthly. In many trades, as for example in the trade of bonneterie, every aspirant was to serve for five years as an apprentice, and then five years more as a journeyman; after which he was to produce his chef d'œuvre. Thus, in those days, no one in France might sell a "bonnet," which, under correction, I take to be the French for any female head-dress, who had

not studied the art during ten years, and who had not then given proof of perfection in it;—a perfection which (if reliance may be placed on circumstances not entirely unknown to some of us) would seem to be regarded by the best possible judges of the question, as not often attained, and as not easily attainable.

But, sixthly; from these obligations, the sons and daughters of master workmen were to a very great extent exempted.

Every one anticipates the results of these puerilities. They tended to confine the manufactures of France to a few privileged families. They gave rise to useless prosecutions, and to many oppressive and unprofitable punishments. They tended to confine the manufacturing business to a few privileged families, and to reduce the number of competitors to the lowest possible amount. They excited from every quarter resentments and remonstrances, which again provoked still more vexatious edicts. One of these, of the 24th December, 1670, ordained that any manufactured goods which should not be in exact conformity to the royal ordinances, should be exhibited on a gibbet nine feet high, bearing the maker's name; and that, after twenty-four hours, they should be cut, torn, burnt, or confiscated. For the second offence, the manufacturer was also to receive a public admonition in a full meeting of his guild. But, for the third offence, he was to be put into the stocks for two hours with the fragments of his confiscated property hanging about him; an edict, says Forbonnais, which one might suppose to have been written in Japan. M. Clement, with greater equity, adds that, before affiliating such a law on the Japanese, one ought to ascertain, what kind of opinion they would have of it.

After trying in vain the efficacy of penalties, Colbert resorted to the use of bounties. He gave 1200 livres to every dyer who conformed to his rules. He gave money to every workman who, being himself in the service of such a master, should marry a female fellow-servant. He gave them a premium on the birth of their first child. He gave to every apprentice entering the trade on his own account, both money and tools. And, in favour of some workmen whom he peculiarly cherished, he even gave a great reduction of their tailles.

But the storm and the sunshine were alike ineffectual to ripen the fruits of the French Protectionist husbandry. The trades cherished by Colbert died with him. His policy was, however, more long-lived. The authority of his name maintained, till the eve of the Revolution, and even yet supports in France, a commercial system which all her real statesmen reprobate, but in which many sections of the people find their account.

To what causes, it may be asked, is that authority to be referred, since the measures of Colbert, which I have hitherto noticed, were calculated neither to secure the approbation of the wiser few, nor the favour of the unreflecting many? The answer to that inquiry is neither difficult nor doubtful. No man had ever studied more profoundly, or, perhaps, no man ever judged by a surer instinct, the character of his fellow-countrymen. If some of the measures which he pursued were ill-judged, the common motive of them all was to promote the welfare of the great body of the people of France. That object ever lay nearest to his heart. No statesman was ever actuated by a public spirit more genuine, or by a patriotism more ardent, even when the most ill-

directed; and though Colbert has won this praise tardily from generations later than his own, yet it is a praise which, when once firmly won by any ruler of that enthusiastic people, secures to him for all future times the rank and worship of a demigod among them. The love of country of this great minister exhibited itself, I think, chiefly, first, in his unrelenting hostility to all abuses and to the authors of them; secondly, in the splendour and utility of his public works; thirdly, in his creation of a belligerent marine far more powerful than France had ever before seen or contemplated; fourthly, in his labours for the improvement of the laws and judicial system of the kingdom; and, finally, on the patronage which he bestowed on literature, and, therefore, on the literary dispensers of reputation. My limits of time will not allow me to touch on these topics except with great brevity, but I may not altogether pass them over.

First, then, on his accession to power in 1661, Colbert declared war to the knife against the whole brood of peculators, defaulters, and public accountants, by instituting an extraordinary commission, or court of justice, to compel them to disgorge their ill-gotten gains; and though some parts of his subsequent proceedings for that purpose may not bear the test of a very severe morality, some excuse for his rigour may be found, partly in the habits of the times, and partly in the enormous extravagance of the frauds with which he had undertaken to contend.

The authors, or suspected authors, of them were required to produce and verify statements of all the property which they had acquired by inheritance, or otherwise, during the last preceding twenty-six years, and all the curés and vicars of Paris were directed to

call upon the faithful in their respective congregations, to denounce all offences against the treasury of which they might be aware, on pain of excommunication in case of disobedience. The results of the proceedings of this tribunal were, first, to effect the restitution to the Crown of one hundred and ten millions of livres; secondly, to set aside the conveyances of many territorial and other royal rights which had been alienated on no adequate consideration; and, thirdly, to reduce, by eight millions, the annual charge for the public debt. So long as this tempest raged against the financiers alone, the citizens of Paris watched the progress of it with exultation; but the reduction of the dividends payable at the Hôtel de Ville spread alarm, and, for a moment, seemed to threaten a revolt, among all the wealthy inhabitants of that once rebellious city. With the suppression of the Fronde, however, they had ceased to be formidable. Their discontent expressed itself only in impotent murmurs, and in those dismal looks which suggested to Boileau his picture of a "visage plus pâle qu'un rentier, à l'aspect d'un arrêt qui retranche un quartier."

To these retributory measures, Colbert added others for preventing the recurrence of similar abuses. He deprived all fiscal offices of their heritable character. He took from every public accountant securities for the faithful performance of the duties of his office. He exacted of every such officer an habitual residence at his post. He reduced the per centage on all collections of the public revenue. He subjected the estate of every debtor to the Crown to a tacit mortgage for the amount of his debt, which was payable in preference to every other demand. He rendered it necessary that all taxes let to farm should

so be disposed of by public auction, and not otherwise. He established a complete system of keeping and rendering accounts of the receipt and application of the public money; and he devised effective forms and rules for preventing the deviation of any such money from the particular service to which it was properly applicable. Such labours are easily enumerated, and may not collectively assume in the enumeration a very brilliant appearance. But they were such as few other men would have had the diligence, the skill, and the hardihood at once to devise and to enforce.

From the accountants and peculators, Colbert turned to make war on the dishonest creditors of the state. In the depths of his financial distresses, Mazarin had diverted to the use of the Crown the octrois and other dues exigible in the various cities of France, and applicable there to various purposes of local necessity or convenience. To indemnify the citizens for the consequent prejudice to their municipal interests, the Cardinal, as we formerly saw, administered the singular relief of authorising them to exact from themselves as much more money for recruiting the civic treasuries as he had taken away for the behoof of the national treasury. To escape the burden of this double taxation, the communes every where borrowed funds for their indispensable local expenditure. Such funds were, however, unavoidably taken upon an equivocal security; and, therefore, at a high rate of interest; and, in consequence of these improvident loans, Colbert found nearly the whole of France threatened with a kind of municipal bankruptcy. After ascertaining, by a rigid inquest, what was the amount of debt really due, and to what extent the contracts made with the

embarrassed citizens had been fraudulent or usurious, and after establishing a registry in each city of the pecuniary obligations to which each was justly liable, he restored to them all half of the funds which Mazarin had seized, leaving to them the collection and management of the whole of the octrois and other dues which they were thenceforward to divide with the Crown. Applying themselves with new zeal to the improvement of an income in which they were so largely to participate, the communes ere long paid off their debts, and gave a new illustration of the old proverbial truth, that "a half is sometimes greater than the whole."

From the corporation creditors, this sleepless reformer next turned to the Noblesse. To escape their contribution to the tailles and other ordinary taxes, a vast throng of persons had either acquired or laid claim to the privileges of nobility. Some had bought this honour; some had earned it by the discharge of public offices; and many were indebted for it to their own impudence, or to the favour, not hardly propitiated, of the heralds and genealogists, who were but too well disposed to certify the gentle lineage of all whom they knew to be provided with well lined purses. The poorer roturiers were thus condemned to see one after another of their wealthier brethren withdrawing their shoulders from the pressure of the burden which weighed so heavily, because so exclusively, on their own class or caste of society. Indignant at their sufferings, and full of burning zeal for the interests of the treasury, Colbert attacked this noble phalanx with characteristic decision. With one blow he revoked all titles to nobility which had been acquired within the last preceding thirty years. With another he recovered against the usurpers of

noble rank, penalties for that offence, amounting, collectively, to two millions of livres. In every part of France multitudes of parvenus were driven back to the ranks which they had deserted, and were compelled to resume their shares of the load which they had shaken off. In Provence alone, the number who thus shed their false plumage was 1257, all men of mark in their respective vicinities. It is not difficult to imagine how profound was the satisfaction with which all classes of society hailed this signal act of penal justice,—how the ancient Nobles rejoiced to be delivered from their undignified associates,—how the meaner ranks were gladdened at the defeat of an arrogant pretension,—and how the tax-payers welcomed back into their lines the fugitives who had left them to suffer alone. The only mourners were they to whom the public faith was dear,—for to them it appeared nothing less than a robbery to receive money for patents of nobility, and then to revoke the grants on no alleged ground except that the money paid had been inadequate to the advantage obtained. But among the praises of Colbert's administration, and of the age of Louis XIV., a strict integrity in public affairs held no place.

In the custom-houses of France the great minister found his next antagonists. On his accession to power *export* duties were payable, not only on the removal of merchandise beyond the limits of the kingdom, but even when they were removed from one province to another. Nor were the rates of those duties the same in any two provinces. Although the absurdity and the mischiefs of this system baffle description, they may be illustrated by the example of what were called the Customs of Valence. At that place a

duty of from three to five per cent. *ad valorem* was payable, first, on all goods brought into Lyons from Languedoc, from Provence, from the Levant, or from Spain; and, secondly, upon all goods brought from the eastern provinces of France into Languedoc, Provence, or Piedmont. To secure the payment of these duties, all articles subject to them were to be brought to Valence, however great might be the deviation from the shorter and more convenient route; and a vast cordon of revenue officers was accordingly drawn, as a kind of net, round no less than nine of the principal provinces of the kingdom. To abolish this and all other local tariffs, and to substitute for them one general scale of customs duties applicable only to the external trade of France, that so the intercourse between the different parts of the realm might be entirely free, was a scheme to which Colbert devoted all the energies of his mind, and all the delegated authority and influence of the Crown. He was, however, opposed by the multitudes who had a vested or a prospective interest in these strange abuses. He was opposed also by that still greater and more irrational multitude which found in the commercial isolation of their respective provinces food with which to nourish their provincial prejudices. And in many parts of the kingdom those prejudices found supporters, and Colbert antagonists, in the old provincial states which still maintained their languid and decaying existence. Before such adversaries he at last recoiled. Some of the provinces resisted the proposed tariff altogether, and, so far as commerce was concerned, they were allowed to remain and to be described as provinces on the footing of foreign countries. Other provinces demanded and obtained the maintenance of all their

old and distinctive laws of customs, and they were thenceforward known as the foreign provinces. But about half of France acquiesced in the new and uniform tariff, and that part of the realm acquired the fiscal designation of the "Five great farms." With this incomplete success Colbert was obliged to be content. He had planted the vigorous shoots of a great future improvement. Yet so slow was their growth that (strange as it now sounds to us) the French Revolution still found the Douane de Valence and the "Five great farms" in full vigour, and swept them away among the throng of obsolete anomalies.

But, secondly, the ambition of Colbert was of too noble a character to be satisfied with increasing the public revenue, by the punishment or prevention of abuses, or by the establishment of new tariffs. He aimed to explore and open new sources of national wealth; and with that view became not merely the patron, but even the author, of some of the noblest of the public works of France, and especially of the great scheme, so often meditated by others, of uniting the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. To Pierre Paul de Riquet is, indeed, due the praise of all the science which devised, and of all the energy which actually accomplished, the Canal of Languedoc. Without presuming to explain the mechanical contrivances by which he subdued the obstacles which nature seemed to have opposed to that undertaking, I believe I am safe in asserting that, when due allowance is made for the inexperience of his age, Riquet exhibited in that great work an extent of genius, and a variety of resources, which entitle him to a high place amongst the greatest engineers of modern times. The appropriate praise of Colbert is, that he appreciated the capacity, admired the energy, and sustained the

courage of his great agent in this scheme, — that he continued to hope while others desponded, and was unmoved by all the expostulations and ridicule by which the prophets of evil, and the speakers of evil, of those days would have arrested the enterprise, — and that, in the midst of all other demands on the public treasury, he advanced from that source one half of the indispensable outlay. Corneille has celebrated the junction of the two seas in some noble verses, whose only fault is that they say far too much of Louis XIV., and nothing at all of Riquet or of Colbert. Vauban, after traversing the whole length of the canal, and admiring the labours of a genius so kindred to his own, pronounced an eulogy more generous than that of the great dramatist: "The work (he said) is absolutely perfect, with one exception — I have looked in vain for a statue of Riquet."

Thirdly. It was, however, neither as a financier, nor as an economist, that Colbert chiefly acquired the high place which he retains in the admiration of all Frenchmen. His higher, or at least his more effective, claim to their gratitude is, that by him France was first elevated into the foremost rank of maritime powers, so far at least as that rank depends on the possession of a belligerent navy. In 1661, the date of his accession to power, she possessed 30 ships of war, of which 3 were of the first class, 8 of the second, and 7 of the third, the rest being small craft only. At the peace of Nimeguen, in 1678, the royal navy comprised 120 ships of war, of which 12 were of the first class, 26 of the second, and 40 of the third. Five years later, the number had arisen to no less than 273 vessels of all classes, of which 139 were either ships of war or frigates. To man this vast navy, Colbert established a law, not unlike the mari-

time conscription law of France at the present day; and such was its success that, in the year 1670, the number of seamen registered under it amounted to 30,000; and, after the lapse of thirteen years (that is, in 1683) to 77,852. Neither honours nor emoluments were spared to animate the courage of the force thus rapidly called into existence; and, in his official intercourse with his naval commanders, Colbert relaxed his habitual austerity, and cheerfully indulged them in the roughness of manners, and petulance of temper, for which their employment afforded at once the temptation and the apology.

His zeal for this branch of the public service showed itself in other, and yet more laborious, cares. He employed lawyers of great eminence to compile a code of laws for the government of the French navy; and the Ordonnance sur la Marine, which he at length promulgated, rapidly acquired that universal admiration which has ever since followed it. The praise of this great work must, of course, be divided between Colbert and the subordinate agents whom he employed in the execution of it; and, for the same reason, I hesitate to subscribe to the eulogies which he has so largely received as the author of the other codes of law, which were promulgated during his administration. On his accession to power, some of the provinces of France were governed by ancient customs or traditions. Some of them lived under the *droit écrit*, or ancient laws of Rome. In some, the provincial jurisprudence was the result of a fusion of the *corpus juris civilis* and of customs borrowed from many different localities. And, in all, the rule for the observance of the people in their transactions with each other, and for the guidance of the judges in their decisions, was, to a great extent, doubtful and inde-

terminate. To reduce this chaos into order, Colbert employed Lamoignon, and others of the greatest jurists of his times; and, in the years 1667, 1669, 1670, and 1673, appeared four codes, the result of their labours, and, as it is said, of Colbert's superintendence and revision of them. They were known as the Ordonnance pour la Réformation de la Justice Civile—as the Réglement général pour les Eaux et Forêts—as the Ordonnance Criminelle—and as the Ordonnance de Commerce. During one hundred and thirty years, and until superseded by the Code Napoleon, they formed the basis of the law of France, both civil and penal. But as the name of Justinian was superscribed to the work of Tribonian and his fellow-labourers, and as the name of Napoleon has been given to the compilation of Cambécéres and his colleagues, so has the name of Louis XIV. been attached to that of Colbert, of Lamoignon, and his associates. For in civil, as in military life, the laurel is habitually assigned to the leader under whose auspices the victory has been won, rather than to the subordinates by whose toil, and ability, and self-sacrifice it may have been really gained; and, in this distribution of fame, there is sometimes more substantial equity, and always more public convenience, than might be supposed by those who never, either as leaders or as subordinates, wielded either sword or pen in such a controversy.

Finally. No man ever understood, better than Colbert, the importance of the suffrages of those by whom the pen is so wielded as an instrument of dominion over mankind. To many of them he granted pensions; and in the list of his pensioners, amidst many heroes of the French Dunciad, occur the names of Pierre Corneille, with his description as " le premier

poëte dramatique du monde"—of Molière, "excellent poëte comique"—of the Sieur Racine, "poëte Français"—and of le Sieur Mézerai, "historiographe." The favour of many foreign writers was wooed in the same persuasive manner; but among them I see no Englishman, nor any name more eminent than those of Huyghens and Isaac Vossius. To take other securities for the permanency of his own reputation, Colbert established the Academies of Sciences, of Painting, and of Inscriptions. The last of these was so called, because its peculiar office was that of devising inscriptions in honour of the great king of France, and in celebration of his triumphs, military and civil. As far as Louis himself is concerned, however, no great gratitude was due to this company of eulogists; for, among many other extravagancies, he was indebted to them for his famous device of the sun rising over the world, with the legend, "Nec pluribus impar;" a boast, perhaps, as ambiguous in its meaning, as it was arrogant in its appearance, and offensive in its effect. The interpretation of it by Louis himself, in his instructions to the Dauphin, is, I suppose, the right one. It is that, adequate as he had proved himself to be to the conduct of so many great affairs, he would not have been inadequate to the government of many other of the kingdoms of the earth, if they, like France, had been brought, or should be brought, within the radiance of his solar beams. If such be, indeed, the sense which the authors of this metallurgic hyperbole intended it to convey, it was as unjust as it was extravagant. For, beyond all dispute, the boasted sufficiency to such and so many great undertakings belonged, not to Louis himself, but to his great minister, Colbert. In some of these he had greatly erred. But in all of them, by turns, he had exhibited a range of knowledge, an energy of applica-

tion, a contempt for difficulty and for danger, and a zeal for the glory, the greatness, and the welfare of his country, which entitles him to an eminent place among the most illustrious statesmen, who have impressed an indelible trace of their lives and labours on the history of mankind.

To Colbert, however, no such honour was rendered, either by the king whom he had so well served, or by the people for whom he had so diligently laboured. Louis had long been overawed by the genius of his great minister. The forms of submission and deference had, indeed, been as studiously maintained by the subordinate, as they had been rigidly exacted by the superior. The austere and frugal comptroller general had even indicted eulogies on the Grand Monarque, and had projected costly monumental works in honour of his conquests. The homage was coldly received, while the substantial power, which it was intended to conceal, was suspiciously resented. With the peace of Nimeguen, Louis had regained his insatiable passion for buildings and other selfish expenditure; and as Versailles, Trianon, Marly, the gigantic aqueduct of Maintenon, and the edifices of the Place Vendôme, one after another drained the resources which Colbert had accumulated, his scruples and remonstrances became a continual rebuke, and a serious obstacle, to the extravagance of his master. With his pride wounded, and his temper irritated, the king at length inflicted on the aged statesman some of those indignities which, when coming from him, withered the very souls of those who worshipped at that idolatrous court. Already worn out by labour and disease, the heart-broken old man sickened and died; and when the last letter he was ever to receive from Louis reached him, he refused to read it, exclaiming

in the bitterness of his soul, in words like those of Wolsey, "If I had but served my God as faithfully as I have served this man, I should long since have worked out my salvation. But now what awaits me!"

Nor were the people of France more grateful than their sovereign to their aged servant. His death was hailed at Paris by a perfect storm of satirical epigrams, and to rescue his body from the anticipated outrages of the Parisians, it was conveyed by night from his hotel to the place of interment under a strong military escort.

The catastrophe is not without its moral. If, among those whom I address, there be any who are proposing to devote all the powers of their souls and bodies to the service of the state, but who may not hope either to command her armies in the field, or to lead her parties in the senate, let them not shrink from that most severe and thankless service; but let them learn betimes to look to the approbation of God and of their own consciences as their only reward. If they should bring all the energies and all the virtues of Colbert to their appointed offices, they will assuredly find a Louis XIV. to appropriate to himself the glory of their labours, and an ignorant multitude to exact from them the expiation of his incapacity, and faults, and blunders.

At the death of Colbert it became necessary to reconstitute the administration of which he had been the real, though the unavowed, head, and especially to replace him in the office of comptroller-general by a successor who would at once have skill to replenish the treasury, and meekness to acquiesce in the improvident exhaustion of it. But it was above all things essential that the choice should appear to Louis to be his own

unprompted and spontaneous act. It deserves to be told how he was beguiled into that belief.

"What think you," said he to the Chancellor le Tellier, "of Le Pelletier as my new minister of finance." "Sire," answered the sagacious lawyer, "that is a subject on which I have no claim to your confidence. He is the son of my guardian, and I have, therefore, always regarded him as my own child." "No matter," replied the king, "tell me what is your opinion of him." "My opinion then is, sire, that he is upright, honourable, and industrious; but he is unfit to be a minister of finance; he is not severe enough." "What," rejoined Louis, "do you suppose I wish that any of my servants should be severe to my subjects. Since he is faithful and diligent, I appoint him to be my comptroller general."

The king believed the decision to be his own, and was wilfully blind to the motives which had induced the chancellor so skilfully to draw him into it. The choice of Le Pelletier virtually placed the whole government in the hands of Le Tellier himself, and of his son Louvois, the minister secretary of state for war. For they, when supported by the new comptroller general, formed not merely a numerical, but a most effective majority of the new administration. Their colleagues, Seignelay and Colbert de Croissy, were neither of them gifted with the talents by which nations are governed, and absolute monarchs held in an unconscious bondage. Louvois possessed both of these talents in an eminent degree.

He had not completed his fourteenth year when he received from Louis a grant of the reversion of the office of secretary of state for war, to take effect on the death of his father Le Tellier; and it was the boast of the king that he had himself, by his own ex-

ample and instructions, formed the young minister for the duties of his place. If so, he might well be proud of his success, for it is the universal consent of all the most competent judges, that Louvois was a perfect model of an administrator of the department of war. His method, his comprehensiveness, his foresight, his force of will, and his almost preternatural activity, moulded the belligerent force under his orders into an instrument so flexible for all the purposes of aggressive warfare, and so terrible to those against whom it was directed, that Louis was far more indebted to his minister than even to his generals for the military triumphs which embellished his reign, and for the conquests by which his dominions were extended. So eminent, indeed, were his merits, and so universally acknowledged, even in his own lifetime, that, even in the jealous court of Versailles, they were celebrated in the highest terms by the most devout of the worshippers of the great king. Thus Madame de Sevigné, in a letter written on the 5th August, 1676, says of the siege of Aire, "M. Louvois carries off all the honours. His authority is absolute, and he commands the armies to advance and to retreat at his pleasure." His pretensions were not, however, undisputed. Turenne, in his great campaign of 1674–5, had the courage to act in direct and systematic disobedience of his orders, and Luxembourg could not live at peace with him. Indeed, if Madame de Sevigné be right, Louvois was the Haman of Racine's Esther, and either Turenne, or Luxembourg, the Mardochée.

Well had it been for the fair fame of Turenne if he had as inflexibly refused to do homage to this Haman when he received his commands to lay waste the Palatinate. It is a far darker stain on the memory

of that great captain than even his traitorous adhesion to the foreign enemies of his country during the wars of the Fronde. But the return of Louvois to the same atrocious system of making war in 1689, in defiance of the indignant protestations of the whole civilised world, is a stain far deeper still, not only on himself, but on his master, and even on his nation. For such guilt no administrative genius can make any atonement, nor any success afford the slightest apology. It is one of those crimes, the recollection of which must ever, in the judgment of all impartial men, depress Louis and his minister from the level of the chiefs of the civilised world to a rank far below that of the most ferocious and pitiless of the rude barbarians by whom the Roman empire was devastated. But it forms no unmeet preparation for the one great measure of domestic policy which illustrated the years during which Louvois was the real, though the unacknowledged, head of the civil government of France.

Religion, as inculcated on Louis XIV. by his confessors, is said by M. de Sismondi to have been reducible to two precepts, "Desist from adultery; exterminate heresy." If the king fell short in the first of those duties, he wrought works of supererogation in the second. Yet he did not commence his holy war with the sword.

One third of all the profits of all the vacant benefices of France was set apart by Louis as the capital of a sort of Bank of Conversion, at the head of which he placed Pelisson, himself a convert from the faith of Geneva. Under Pelisson were employed subordinate officers in all the cities and provinces of France, in which Protestantism most abounded. Their duty was to purchase adhesions to the Church of Rome.

For this traffic there was a regular scale of prices, ranging from five to one hundred livres, according to the estimated value of each man's apostasy.—an enormous price, indeed, if regard be had to the value of the commodity bought and sold; for, at half the money, the rogues and vagabonds of France might, as it should seem, have broken this royal Bank of Faith in a month, and kept the Catholic benefices indefinitely vacant. Yet, gazette after gazette published lists of many hundreds of Pelisson's miraculous conversions; and if the union of folly, fraud, and impudence, in the highest possible degree, be any departure from the established laws of nature, the term was not ill-bestowed. Such was the religion of him, dissent from whom was about to be followed by the most disgusting, if not the most terrible, of all the persecutions with which the Christian world has been visited!

Pelisson's converts, as he himself says of them, desired to be moistened liberally by the rich dews which it was his genial office to distil. Many of them, therefore, devised the obvious scheme of a relapse, a reconversion, and a new sale of their souls to the royal purchaser. He answered them, however, not by more livres, but by an edict of the year 1679, which condemned all relapsed persons to banishment for life, and confiscation of all their property. The blow, as we shall hereafter see, reached much further than to the knaves at whom it was aimed.

It was in the preceding year that the peace of Nimeguen brought the greatness of Louis to its apogee. Supreme over his own subjects, and over all the powers of Europe, it remained for him to accomplish the strange law or destiny of his race, by submitting his mind to a thraldom from which he should never

again be either able or willing to emancipate himself. The chains so indissoluble, because they were at once so soft and so well concealed, were grasped by the too famous Madame de Maintenon.

During the first sixteen years of her life she had adhered to the religious creed or society of her great-grandfather, Agrippa d'Aubigné, one of the most eminent of the champions and historians of the Huguenots. Even after her elevation, Louis (as we learn from her own letters) would occasionally upbraid her with too fond a remembrance of the heresy of her youth; but ambition which (as she also informs us) was the master-spirit of her life, rendered her triumphant over all such domestic associations and early remembrances. She even exaggerated, in her own person, the bigotry of her royal patron, and became the willing accomplice of Père la Chaise in provoking him to engage in the great crusade of the 17th century.

In that servile court, obedience to the presiding demigod was not merely a law but a passion. To win his smile by making proselytes became the daily labour of all the sycophants who thronged it. At each levee, dukes, and peers, and bishops, and generals laid before him their lists of new converts. No post reached Versailles without intelligence of some Protestant church having been demolished, or of the dispersion of some Protestant assembly. If, with such grateful tidings, there also came the news of riots, outrages, and conflagrations, of which the heretics had been the victims, the sovereign, jealous as he was of his power, regarded with seeming indifference, and with at least supposed favour, such violations of the laws of which he was the guardian.

For the law was, even yet, on the side of the dis-

senters. The Edict of Nantes still remained on the statute book of France. During fourscore years and upwards, 2,000,000 of Frenchmen had regarded it as the charter of their civil and religious liberties; and, of the rest, many respected it as the corner-stone of the peace and union of the kingdom. The great founder of the Bourbon dynasty had consecrated it as the very ark of the constitution, purchased with the toils, the sacrifices, and the bloodshed of his glorious life. It was the one royal ordinance to which the people of the realm had learnt to look with enthusiasm, as an immortal trophy of the valour and wisdom of their ancestors. Even the triumphant Louis, therefore, paused before laying his hand upon such a monument. He could not at once subvert it, but he could, by new legislation, render it ineffectual.

In the succeeding century the statute book of our own country also was to be disgraced by a penal code against the Roman Catholics. It was, indeed, prompted by the too well founded fears of our ancestors for the Protestant succession, and for the civil liberties of England. It was, I admit, to a considerable extent, a menace only; as to the last, it remained dormant in many of its worst enactments. But whatever may be the worth of these or of any similar apologies, that penal code was a great crime, and has been righteously and signally punished. When, however, the adherents of the Church of Rome denounce that or any other form of religious persecution as unexampled, one is constrained to ask, whether there be really any limits to human credulity in the acceptance of fiction, or of human incredulity in the rejection of truth? There are, we know, those who regard the story of Julius Cæsar as a myth. Some allow no existence to Mahomet,

except as the ideal hero of an Arabian tale. Dr. Whately, as we are all aware, has gone far to annihilate the faith of mankind in the life and adventures of Napoleon Buonaparte. But what are these historical discoveries in comparison with that which requires us to disbelieve the surpassing pre-eminence of the Church of Rome, in every country and in every age, in the mysteries of tormenting heretics in mind, body, and estate! We must be more mythical than Strauss, more sceptical than Whately, if we do not recognise in her the great original, of whom all other persecutors have ever been but timid, feeble, and most imperfect imitators. Thus, for example, the penal code which grew up amidst the agonies and alarms of our revolution of 1688, was nothing else than a faint copy of the edicts which, in the profound tranquillity of the peace of Nimeguen, were promulgated by Louis XIV., with the aid, and by the advice, of some of the greatest statesmen, lawyers, and divines, whom the Catholic Church of France could boast, at the very climax of the literary and ecclesiastical glory of that kingdom.

It provided that no Protestant might hold any public office, political or municipal, or engage in any liberal profession. No Protestant woman might discharge the office of midwife. No mixed marriages might be contracted. By one provision, all Protestants were forbidden to employ *Catholic* valets, lest the valet should be seduced into heresy. By another they were forbidden to employ *Protestant* valets, because such persons could not be trusted in such a service. No Protestant could be the tutor or guardian of a child, however nearly related to him. All bastards, of whatever age, must be brought up or instructed in the Catholic faith. Any child of the age

of seven years might abjure the Protestant religion, and the parent opposing any such abjuration, was to incur the most severe penalties. Converts to the Church of Rome were to enjoy an immunity during three years from all the demands of their creditors, and during two years from all tailles and quarterings of troops; while the treasury was to be indemnified for the loss by doubling those charges upon the contumacious. All the property of all Protestant churches beyond the permitted limits, and such of their property within those limits as was devoted to the maintenance of their poor, was transferred to the Catholic hospitals. No legacy could be bequeathed for the benefit of any consistory. All physicians were required to report the state of their Protestant patients to the magistrates, that domiciliary visits might be made to obtain, if possible, their abjuration. No sick Protestant might be relieved or attended in any private houses, but, if they had not houses of their own, were to be conveyed to hospitals under the care of Catholic physicians and divines. And, finally, if any new convert should be admitted into any Protestant congregation, the pastor was to be punished by banishment and confiscation of his goods, the people by the final dispersion of their assembly.

I will not undertake to say that our own Parliament may not afterwards have invented some improvements even on this iniquitous series of enactments. They were but too apt pupils in the wicked acts of their Catholic models. But from the very lips of those who gave them the example, the reproach of having followed it is as preposterous as, unhappily, it is just. Bacchanals are not the most appropriate censors of drunkenness, nor do rebukes for impurity

come with the happiest effect from the priesthood of Aphrodite.

But Louis and his councillors, lay and ecclesiastical, were soon to advance far beyond the reach of any Protestant imitation. The most powerful of those councillors, after the death of Colbert, were, as we have seen, the Chancellor le Tellier and the Marquis de Louvois, his son; to whom must be added, Madame de Maintenon and Père la Chaise. Le Tellier was, at this time, far advanced in life, and cherished, as he was himself accustomed to say, but one last wish. It was, that he might live long enough to affix the great seal of France to a royal ordinance for the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Louvois contemplated the compulsory union of all Frenchmen in the same forms of worship, and in the avowal, at least, of the same faith, in the light in which he contemplated every other subject. Whenever the impending war with the Protestant powers should be actually declared, such an union would, as he believed, at once deprive them of a formidable alliance within the kingdom, and increase the force and number of the arms by which they might be either resisted, or assailed, abroad. To govern the heart of Louis, and, therefore, to adopt all the maxims by which his confessor governed his conscience, were the very laws of the existence of Madame de Maintenon. Those maxims, as inculcated by La Chaise, might be summed up in the doctrine, that to promote the dominion of the Church of Rome is the one end for which existence has been given to kings, to ministers, to favourites, and to confessors, and to every one within the reach of their authority.

The conduct of all affairs relating to the Protestants fell, at that time, within the department of

Châteauneuf de la Vrillière, one of the four secretaries of state, a man of feeble character, who readily acquiesced in the usurpation by Louvois of some of the most important functions of his office. In April 1684, the king, on Louvois' advice, promulgated one of those ordinances to which I have already referred. It was the law exempting all converts from the duty of quartering the king's troops during the two years next immediately after their conversion. The effect of this enactment was to transfer from La Vrillière to Louvois as minister, or secretary of state, for war, the entire management of all the relations between the Crown and the Heretics of France. For, as the troops withdrawn from the houses of the converts were to be domiciled in those of the contumacious, Louvois, and the officers acting under him, became at once the universal and absolute judges of such contumacy, and the punishers of it without appeal. He introduced into the French language a new word, and added to the miseries of the persecuted a new torment. Diocletian might have envied the ingenuity by which the most Christian king invented the *Dragonnades* for the punishment of erring Christians.

"Louvois," says Madame de Caylus, "finding the kingdom at peace, and fearing that his colleagues in office would eclipse his own importance, was determined, at whatever cost, to employ the sword in a transaction which ought to have been conducted by charity and gentleness alone." In 1685, a French army had hastily been drawn together, by an unfounded alarm, to the Spanish frontier, and were then marched into the southern provinces of France as missionaries of the faith of Rome. We have still the instructions of Louvois to the Marquis de Boufflers, their commandant, to quarter them on the Protestants, and to retain them at each house where they

might be so lodged until the inhabitants of it should be converted; and then to transfer them for the same purpose to another." "The king," wrote Louvois shortly afterwards to another of his officers, "desires that they who will not adopt his religion should suffer the most extreme rigours, and that such of them as may have the stupid ambition of being the last to yield, should be urged to the last extremities."

What, then, were the methods by which these new missionaries laboured to enlarge the borders of their Church? He who would possess such knowledge must purchase it at a heavy price. He must read Elie Benoît, and the other Huguenot martyrologists of those times, and learn from them what are the woes, and what the degradations, into which fanaticism can plunge the inhabitants of this fair world. Or he may consult the yet surviving witnesses of the last European war, who still whisper things, the publicity of which mankind would not endure, about the habits of a brutal soldiery, when let loose to satiate their evil passions amongst a conquered and helpless population. To the Protestant subjects of Louis XIV. that mystery of iniquity was revealed by those whom he sent among them in the holiest of all names, and, avowedly at least, for the most sacred of all purposes. A single passage from Benoît may suggest some of the disclosures which it does not actually make.

"The dragoons," he says, "fixed crosses to their musquetoons, so as the more readily to compel their hosts to kiss them; and if the kiss was not given, they drove the crosses against their stomachs or their faces. They had as little mercy for the children as for the adult, beating them with those crosses, or with the flat sides of their swords so violently, as not seldom to maim them. The wretches subjected the

women also to their barbarities; they whipped them; they disfigured them; they dragged them by the hair through the mud or along the stones. Sometimes they would seize the labourers on the highways, or when following their carts, and drive them to the Catholic churches, pricking them like oxen with their own goads to quicken their pace thither."

If the missionaries themselves may be believed, never was any Christian mission so successful. In one of his reports to his father, the chancellor, Louvois informed him that, in a few weeks, 20,000 conversions had been effected in the Généralité of Montauban, and 60,000 in that of Bourdeaux, where such (he said) was the rapidity of the process, that though so lately as the last month there had been 150,000 Protestants dwelling in that district, there would soon not be as many as 10,000. The Duc de Noailles, commanding the army on the south-east, wrote to Louvois as follows:—"The day after my arrival at Nismes, the most considerable persons of the place made their abjuration. The ardour for change then cooled a little, but, in consequence of my having quartered some troops upon some of the most obstinate, affairs are once more in a good train." . . . . . "I hope that, before the end of the month, not a single Huguenot will be left in the Cevennes." . . . . "The number of these religionists in this province is about 240,000. I find that I have demanded more time than enough in asking you to allow me to the 25th of next month for the conversion of them all. I now think that the whole business will be finished before the end of this month."

Nor were these unmixed falsehoods. There was no small infusion of truth in the most exaggerated of the reports of Louvois and his officers. The spirit

of martyrdom slumbered at that moment among the Protestants, or was tried by a test too sore for our frail humanity. It can, indeed, never be known whether even Polycarp or Ignatius would have borne up against the Dragonnades as firmly as they submitted themselves to the lions. Worried, disgusted, and exasperated beyond endurance, by a plague more loathsome than any which visited Pharaoh, multitudes of the Huguenots subscribed their names, or their marks, to lists laid before them by their tormentors, that they might so gain time and opportunity for flight from their native land. But for such emigrants the new code had set some of its most subtle springes. If any one who had subscribed the roll of the converted was found attempting an escape from France, he was punished with the galleys as an emigrating Protestant. If he staid at home adhering to his religion, he was punished with the same severity as a relapsed Catholic. To have hedged up his opponents in this inextricable dilemma is the ground on which Père la Chaise has been extolled by one of his eulogists as a bright model of legislative wisdom.

Whether such praise was due to him or not, there can be no doubt that both he and his royal penitent received with delight the accounts of the success of their Propaganda. It seemed to them, to Le Tellier, to Louvois, and to Madame de Maintenon, to have levelled all the difficulties which had hitherto forbidden the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. If, they asked, there was really but one religion in France *de facto*, why should there any longer be more than one *de jure?* The sagacity of Madame de Maintenon, aided by her old Huguenot habits and remembrances, was indeed proof against these illusions.

She well knew that the faith of her ancestors was indomitable, even by the Dragonnades of her husband; but with her cold and characteristic shrewdness she remarked, "the parents may be hypocrites, but the children will grow up to be good Catholics."

Yet, while the fatal decision was still in suspense, the Protestants omitted no practicable effort for their own deliverance. Many and pathetic were their appeals to the whole Christian commonwealth, and of these none was more eloquent than that of their great pastor Jurieu. But the custom house officers of France were able to prevent the introduction there of a remonstrance, which all the doctors of France would have been unable to answer. To Louis himself his persecuted subjects addressed pictures of their distress, and petitions for relief, to which no human heart, unless rendered callous by bigotry, could have been insensible. But borrowing, as it is said, the language of Francis I., he told their deputies that, to restore unity of religion to his people, he would willingly employ one of his hands to chop off the other. Despair then dictated bolder courses; and the Protestants of Languedoc, of the Cevennes, of Vivarais, and of Dauphiné met to worship publicly in defiance of the law, that they might refute, by their numbers, the statements of their persecutors as to the multitude of the pretended abjurations. They came together, not with swords, but with Bibles in their hands; and, by the order of Louvois, hundreds of them were slaughtered either by his soldiers, or by the public executioners.

At length, on the 18th October, 1685, one of the darkest days in the dark annals of France, Louis XIV. signed the ordinance which revoked the Edict of Nantes. Those words might seem to imply that he merely abrogated that great charter of his illustrious

ancestor. But the terms of his ordinance went much further than this, and merit peculiar attention.

"Observing (so runs the preamble) with the gratitude which we so justly owe to God, that our cares have produced their desired result, since the better and the larger part of those who professed the religion calling itself reformed, have embraced the Catholic faith, for which reason the further execution of the Edict of Nantes is useless," therefore the royal legislator proceeded to enact, in substance, as follows. The public celebration of the Protestant worship was no longer to be permitted in any part of his kingdom. All Protestant pastors were to quit France within fifteen days, and were to incur the punishment of the galleys for life if they should again officiate in that capacity. But any pastor who should conform to the Catholic Church was to receive a pension exceeding by one third his actual stipend, with a reversion of half of that pension to his widow; and was to be at liberty to practise as an advocate, should such be his wish, without the usual academical studies. Every parent was required to send his children to the Catholic churches, and was forbidden to educate them as Protestants. All emigrants were to return to France within four months, or were to be subjected to the confiscation of all their property. The galleys for life in the case of men, and imprisonment for life in the case of women, were to be the penalties of an attempt to emigrate. To this catalogue of denunciations was added what, in appearance at least, was a just and humane indulgence. "The members of this religion," said the ordinance, "may continue to inhabit the cities and other parts of our realm until it shall please God to enlighten them, without being molested on

account of their religion, so long as they do not engage in the public exercise of it."

It was with a kind of melancholy fitness that this persecuting edict was thus prefaced with a false apology, and closed by a faithless promise. It was false that the better and larger part of the Protestants had embraced the Catholic faith; it was a mere illusion and a snare to promise that the rights of conscience should be respected so long as the Huguenots did not worship publicly.

The resentment with which the heart rises against the royal author of so much guilt and misery is, however, almost silenced by the remembrance of the character of the court, and the spirit of the times in which he lived. Hymned and deified, even in his crimes and follies, by such a chorus as that which daily greeted him with the incense of their flattery, how should a poor mortal man escape the intoxication, or think of himself as less than the God they made him? For they were no vulgar lips or pens which extolled his revocation of the Edict of Nantes as amongst the greatest achievements of his life.

It may have been little that such was the strain of the ladies of his court — that Madame de Maintenon declared that the act "would cover him with glory before God and men" — and Madame de Sevigné, that "there never had been, nor could be, any other ordinance so magnificent, or any act of any other king so glorious, as this." It was, perhaps, something more that the aged Le Tellier sang the Nunc dimittis of Simeon as, on the 18th of October, he attached the great seal of France to the ordinance, and actually died twelve days afterwards. But Louis had higher suffrages than these. His admirable grandson, the Duc de Bourgogne, anticipated "the astonishment

with which all Europe would regard the extinction, by a single edict, of a heresy with which six preceding kings had contended in vain." The great Arnauld, while describing the measure as "a little too violent," declared that "he did not think it unjust." The still greater Bossuet, and the eloquent Fléchier, called on their congregations to lift up their voices in loud thanksgiving for this blessing to the Church. And the Gallican Church herself, as represented by her synod of May, 1685, that is, while the Dragonnades were yet in progress, had the intrepidity to assure the king that, "without violence, and without arms," he had induced all reasonable people to abandon heresy, and had "reclaimed the wanderers who, perhaps, would never have returned to the bosom of the Church, except by the road strewn with flowers which he had opened for them." The offence, therefore, was not that of Louis alone, nor did he alone sustain the punishment.

The edict of revocation was executed with inflexible rigour. The pastors, and amongst them the celebrated Claude, were driven into immediate exile. Vast crowds of fugitives, with more or less success, attempted to follow. Some bribed the guards stationed along the frontier. Some forced for themselves a passage with the sword. Delicate and aged women, says Benoît, might be seen crawling many weary leagues in the hope of escaping at once from their persecutors and from their country. Some of the younger, he adds (not, perhaps, without the involuntary smile which will occasionally light up the French countenance in its deepest gloom), disguised themselves by spoiling their complexions, by producing artificial wrinkles, and by pretending to be dumb. Few ships quitted the coast without carrying

away fugitives stowed and hidden amidst the cargo. Many put to sea in open boats. The highways were thronged with Protestants yoked by chains to the most desperate criminals. Gentlemen who had, till then, lived in affluence and in honour, crowded the galleys of Marseilles, and women of every rank and condition of life filled, as prisoners, the convents and the gaols of France. The reign of terror, which was to deform the close of the succeeding century, was not more formidable or more extensive.

After the lapse of thirty eventful years from the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, Louis was an infirm and an aged man. He had survived his children and his grandchildren. He had been humbled by the victories of Eugene and Marlborough. He was overwhelmed with debt. He was hated by the people who had so long idolised him, and was compelled to listen to the indignant invectives which the whole civilised world poured forth against his blind and inhuman persecutions. Yet, in March, 1715, and within five months of his death, he published another ordinance, declaring that every man who had continued to reside in France after the ordinance of 1685, had given conclusive proof that he was a Catholic, because, if not a Catholic, he would not have been permitted to dwell there. It was, therefore, enacted, that every one who had avowed his purpose to persist in the Protestant religion should be regarded as a relapsed heretic, and punished accordingly. To quit France as a Protestant had been declared, by the law of 1685, a crime punishable by the galleys for life. Not to have quitted France was declared, by the law of 1715, conclusive proof of a voluntary continuance there as a Catholic. The code of persecution was again erected on flagrant absurdity and falsehood—the

most fitting and convenient foundation for all such codes. And then the long career of him in whose name, and by whose sanction, it had been promulgated reached its close. He died, declaring to the Cardinals Rôhan and Bissy, and to his confessor, the Jesuit Le Tellier, that, being himself altogether ignorant of ecclesiastical questions, he had acted under their guidance, and as their agent, in all that he had done against either the Jansenists or the Protestant heretics, and, on those his spiritual advisers, he devolved the responsibility to the Supreme Judge.

We may well believe, as we must devoutly hope, that the decrees of that dread tribunal are often more lenient, as they are always more just, than the sentences which erring man pronounces on his fellows. And yet, however deeply conscious of our liability to such error, we may not on that account shrink from the unwelcome duty of echoing the indignant reproaches which have been cast on the name of Louis the Persecutor by every generation which has been born into the world since his departure from it. Even though the posthumous infamy of such oppressors may be insufficient entirely to prevent the renewal of such oppressions, it is not altogether ineffectual; and History would abdicate one of her highest privileges and most sacred duties, if, in a faint distrust of her own influence, she hesitated, calmly indeed and gravely, yet decisively and unambiguously, to denounce the guilt, and to brand the memories of such offenders against the religion of Christ and the welfare of mankind.

I have already taken occasion to avow my belief, that it is not only permitted to us to trace the march of a retributive Providence in the history of mankind, but that reverently and humbly to interpret the laws

by which the Divine government of the world is conducted, is the highest of the ends with a view to which any wise man engages in a review of that history. To myself it seems impossible, that any such man should well consider the events which followed these persecutions, without regarding them as among the most signal examples of the retributive justice of God. Even they who dislike and avoid, as unphilosophical, the religious phraseology of such an avowal, are not seldom driven to the use of more circuitous, but not, I think more profound, terms, to give expression to the same general meaning.

The extent of the depopulation to which France was subjected by the edict of October, 1685, has been estimated by many different writers of great authority, in terms varying with their respective sympathies, political or religious. The Duc de Bourgogne, anxious to vindicate his grandfather, appears to have concluded that the emigrants did not exceed 68,000. Voltaire calculates them as amounting, in the first three years, to 50,000 families. Marshal Vauban represented to Louvois that, in five years, 100,000 Frenchmen had fled the conntry; and that 9000 of the best seamen, with 12,000 soldiers and 600 officers, had joined the enemies of France. M. de Sismondi considers the loss to have exceeded 300,000 men; and M. Capefigue, the latest writer on the subject, hostile to the name and cause of the Protestants, reports, as the result of his searches into the still extant provincial records, that at least 225,000 of their number quitted the kingdom. But all these writers are agreed that the fugitives were amongst the bravest, the most intelligent, and the most industrious, members of society; and that they carried with them into hostile countries the mechani-

cal arts by which they had, till then, enriched their own, and by which they far more than repaid the hospitality which everywhere welcomed them.

Of the numbers who perished in ineffectual attempts to escape, in conflicts with the troops of Louvois, on the scaffold, in the prisons, and on the galleys, the conjectural estimates are still more various and uncertain. But no one disputes that the loss was enormous, or that the universal alarm and anxiety which were protracted during so many years, induced other and scarcely less lamentable evils.

The cry of distress from the sufferers was answered from every part of Europe by a cry of pity and of indignation. It gave to the confederacy against Louis both the energy of the vindictive passions, and the support which, in drawing the sword, men derive from the belief, that it is wielded, in a sacred cause, against the common enemy of mankind.

By this egregious error, as well as crime, of Louis and his councillors, William, the head of that confederacy, was enabled to wrest from the king of France, and to vindicate as his own, the position which Henry IV., and Richelieu, and Mazarin, and even Louis himself, had assumed as protector and guide of the Protestant powers. This hereditary weapon of his house was thenceforward turned with fatal efficacy against it. The victories of Eugene and Marlborough, the humiliations of Gertruydenberg, and the concessions of Utrecht, were all among the direct results of the Dragonnades, and of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

But they were not the only, or the most fatal, results. The age in which Louis lived was far too enlightened for the submissive endurance of such enormities. They gave birth to new and dangerous

ideas. They suggested questions never to be discussed with safety, in any land in which the fictions of government are, at the same time, falsehoods. They provoked even the devout Fénélon to inquire into the grounds on which the will of a single man was to be the arbiter of the happiness and of the creeds of millions. They contributed largely to dissolve the illusions of French loyalty to the absolute king of France. Great as was the descent from the "Télémaque" to the "Social Contract," that descent had now become inevitable. The grave protests of the Archbishop of Cambray against so glaring an infringement of the laws of the gospel and of the feelings of humanity, ripened at last into the protest of Rousseau against the fundamental principles of all human society. Among the countless causes which were to combine to overthrow the Dynasty of the Bourbons, and to conduct the descendants of Louis to the scaffold and to exile, few were more active than the blind and bigotted zeal with which, at the bidding of priests, and women, and evil councillors, and especially of Le Tellier and Louvois, he sentenced so large a proportion of his unoffending subjects to unmerited sufferings of the same general nature.

That in the all wise and equitable judgment of Him whose judgments are alone of any real importance to the highest or to the meanest of us, the offence of Louis may have been mitigated by many considerations, of which Omniscience alone can take cognisance, I willingly and gladly believe. He was a man of many noble purposes, and of many generous impulses; and he laboured under disadvantages and temptations by which no other man was ever so powerfully assailed. But to us he is known only as

the depositary of one of the highest trusts which was ever committed by God to any of his creatures; and, as his elevation was eminent, and his abuse of it conspicuous, so, according to a general law of our existence, was the magnitude of his offence proclaimed by the magnitude of the punishment which it drew upon himself and on those whose felicity or sorrows were inseparable from his.

If any teacher of what is called "*the positive*" shall reject this teaching as puerile or as superstitious, let him at least substitute some other explanation of phenomena which no scepticism can dispute, and of sequences which no incredulity can deny. In the meanwhile we will cling to our long cherished belief, that the bonds are still unbroken and indissoluble, which, as our Bibles assure us, connected together, in the days of old, the oppression of the just and the judicial chastisement of the oppressor.

LECTURE XXIII.

ON THE ABSOLUTE MONARCHY AS ADMINISTERED BY LOUIS XIV. IN PERSON.

On the death of Mazarin, Louis XIV. had announced that he would be his own chief minister. On the death of Louvois in 1691, that boast was, for the first time, completely verified. Better had it been for France if he had continued to the last in a real, though in a disguised, pupillage. He was admirably qualified to sustain the character of a king, and no less eminently unfit to discharge the more arduous office of an administrator.

Of all the external advantages which best become a monarch, both nature and fortune were bountiful, if not rather prodigal, to Louis. It was well said, that if the word "majesty" had never been in use before, it must have been invented to characterise him. His person was stately and of exquisite proportions. The consciousness of supreme authority, tempered by a generous respect towards even the

meanest of his associates, gave to his countenance a noble expression, to which each of his finely sculptured features contributed its share. In all his gestures the sense of high dignity was animated and controlled by a graciousness which captivated every one who approached him, and by an elegance which seemed instinctive in his nature. His courtesy to all men, and still more to all women, was that of a *preux chevalier*. His familiar conversation was grave but engaging, replete with curious anecdotes, and abounding in reflections well weighed if not profound, and unborrowed if not original. His more sustained elocution flowed with facility and copiousness; and if no man exacted so large a tribute of applause, none possessed in greater perfection the talent of bestowing praise which went straight to the heart, and settled there.

I doubt whether any human being ever enjoyed, in greater perfection, the blessing of nerves toned to habitual energy, and exempt from all morbid sensitiveness. Heat, cold, pain, fatigue, and hunger, seemed to have no power over him. Not only his delicate courtiers but his hardy veterans admired the stoicism of their invulnerable king; and his mental composure was on a level with his bodily hardihood. No provocation could excite him to unseemly anger, and no calamity could depress him to unmanly dejection. If he was often the victim, he was never the slave of appetite or passion. Though constantly exposed to the allurements of the most exquisite flattery, and of the most fascinating caresses, he never yielded himself to the guidance of any favourite, male or female; but adhered, with immutable constancy and calmness, to the ministers whom he had either trained or chosen.

This unshaken equilibrium of mind, and firmness of bodily constitution, enabled Louis to maintain a continuity of mental labour, an exact method in business, and a consistency of purpose, which imparted a certain dramatic unity of action to the whole of his long career. Under all vicissitudes of good and evil fortune, he lived for the single purpose of enlarging and consolidating the powers of his crown.

Louis was a self-worshipper; but to maintain that worship he carefully cherished in his bosom, and practised in his private relations, the virtues which he most highly respected; such as truth, honour, courtesy, courage, and fidelity to his promises; except, indeed, the promise which he made on his espousals. It was his evil fortune to be the object of a yet more intoxicating worship from the illustrious authors by whom he was surrounded, but it was also his wisdom to make a skilful use even of that disadvantage. He appreciated, extolled, and, not seldom, rewarded, their genius; and earned in exaggerated, but yet immortal, praises, a recompense such as a thousand fold the same expenditure of money or of labour in any other direction could not have purchased for him. Yet, if it be indeed true, as some modern French writers maintain, that the great dramatists of his age at once represented and apologised for the disorderly passions of the enamoured king, in the mimic heroes whom they sent to head the stage before him, well indeed had it been both for him and for them if they had substituted their keenest shafts of satire for the most seductive and eloquent of those dishonest eulogies.

I do not think that either the writings of Louis, or the histories or memoirs of his reign, justify any high estimate of his intellectual powers. He had indeed,

in perfection, some of the talents of a mere man of business. He could sustain the weight of any number of details, however intricate or tedious; and, within a range of ideas neither very comprehensive nor very profound, was perspicacious, accurate, and persevering. But there is no proof, nor, indeed, any considerable suggestion, that he was skilful in the practical science of government, or well instructed in any of the moral sciences which are tributary to it.

His memory is, however, enshrined in Voltaire's "Siècle de Louis Quatorze." The king and his great eulogist seem to have been born for the express purpose of bearing to each other the relation of hero and historian; so complete and so harmonious was the correspondence between the dramatic majesty of the Grand Monarque of Versailles and the dramatic imagination of the philosopher of Ferney. Nature had lavished on the imperator of France all the gifts, and Fortune all the felicities, which the dictator of the republic of letters could best appreciate and pourtray. The dominion of either potentate has now, indeed, passed away; but the book to which this alliance between them gave birth must ever remain an inimitable monument to the greatness both of the idol and the idolater. Nor, indeed, is any one likely to hazard such an imitation. We have as little prospect of seeing a new Siècle de Louis Quatorze, as a new tragedy on the story of Zaire. It is a trophy to the fame of Louis which no meaner hand can either embellish or subvert. But while it protects his memory against all injurious assaults, it may, for that very reason, impart freedom to the attempt to estimate rightly, even though it be unfavourably, his real cha-

racter as the personal administrator of the government of France.

It is, indeed, an attempt which has been made so often, and by authors of so much eminence, that, unless by sacrificing truth to novelty, I believe it to be impossible to offer anything on the subject which would not be, in substance, a repetition of what has been said, and well said, before. The pencil and the chisel did not multiply representations of the bodily form and features of Louis during his lifetime, more frequently than the pen has delineated his character since his death. The histories and the memoirs of his reign may be said to emulate the number and the gigantic proportions of those royal edifices by which it was illustrated; and all that remains to any one who would now pronounce a just judgment on the conduct of the great king himself, is to follow the best of the innumerable guides who present themselves to his notice. I, therefore, have selected M. Lemontey as my chief authority, believing, as I do, that his essay, "Sur l'Etablissement Monarchique de Louis XIV.," is at once the most complete and the most compendious of the various summaries which have been published of the facts to which I shall have occasion to refer as the basis of the conclusions which are to follow.

Louis himself, indeed, has been drawn by his own hand more distinctly, if less powerfully, than by M. Lemontey, or than by Voltaire himself. Though an illiterate man, he was a diligent writer, and his collected works fill six octavo volumes. In the first and second of them will be found his Mémoirès Historiques, addressed to the Dauphin, and containing a series of instructions for his guidance whenever he should be called to wear the crown of France. The

following extracts from them will explain what was his estimate of his own kingly duties and prerogatives. Yet it should be observed that these isolated passages are detached from a context which is generally honourable both to the character and the understanding of their royal author; and that his naked theory of despotism is really propounded in his memoirs, not idly or ostentatiously, but in order to enforce upon his destined successor those sacred duties, which he judged to be inseparable from the possession of absolute authority.

"It is," writes the royal interpreter of the science of government, "the will of Heaven, who has given kings to man, that they should be revered as his vicegerents, he having reserved to himself alone the right to scrutinise their conduct." "It is the will of God that every subject should yield to his sovereign an implicit obedience." "The worst calamity which can befal any one of our rank is to be reduced to that subjection in which the monarch is obliged to receive the law from his people." "It is the essential vice of the English monarchy, that the king can make no extraordinary levies of men or money without the consent of the parliament, nor convene the parliament without impairing his own authority." "All property within our realm belongs to us in virtue of the same title. The funds actually deposited in our treasury, the funds in the hand of revenue officers, and the funds which we allow our people to employ in their various occupations, are all equally subject to our control." "Be assured that kings are absolute lords, who may fully and freely dispose of all the property in the possession either of churchmen or of laymen, though they are bound always to employ it as faithful stewards." "Since the lives of his subjects

belong to the prince, he is obliged to be solicitous for the preservation of them." "The first basis of all other reforms was the rendering my own will properly absolute." Such, in his more contemplative moods, was his view of his own kingly powers. In his colloquial moments the same doctrines were more pithily compressed into his celebrated aphorism, "L'Etat c'est moi."

It was at the date of the treaty of Nimeguen, of August 1678, that this autocratic theory had received the most complete practical development; for, at that time, the dominion of Louis was elevated to its greatest height, and was resting upon its most secure foundation. What, then, were those elements of power in reliance on which he so confidently maintained those doctrines, in his own person, and so unambiguously inculcated them on the heir-apparent of his crown?

First. His lofty conception of his own regal state was sustained by the command of a regular army, such as the European world had never before seen since the days of Charlemagne, or perhaps of the Antonines. The veterans who had grown up during his minority in the lawless wars of the Fronde had been silently, but rapidly, disbanded; and their ranks had been filled by boys, trained up from their youth in a strict and salutary discipline. Boileau, after attending a review of that young army, said with equal truth and humour, "elle sera fort bonne quand elle sera majeure:" and so it happened. They were carefully instructed in all the manœuvres and military arts which Gustavus Adolphus had introduced into modern warfare. They were the first French troops who were clothed, armed, and accoutred uniformly and according to fixed regulations. They were re-

cruited by royal officers, and not, as formerly, by the governors of the different provinces. By the king himself, and no longer by those governors, all commissions were granted, and all promotions made among them. The ordnance, the engineers, the commissariat, and all the other military departments now, for the first time, received a regular organisation. The offices of constable, high admiral, lieutenant general of France, and all the other high dignities which conferred on the holders of them a great and indefinite authority, both over the troops and in the civil government, were suppressed; and the soldier's ambition was limited to warlike distinctions, and, as the most elevated of them all, to the rank of Maréchal de France. It was in this service that Condé, Turenne, and Luxembourg had risen to the highest glory. Vauban had created the science of fortification. Louvois had administered, with unrivalled energy, the financial concerns, and the internal economy, of the forces whom those great generals had conducted in the field. Honours freely and judiciously bestowed stimulated the ardour of those who were able to bear arms; and the Hôtel des Invalides, the most superb of all the edifices of the capital of France, was constructed for the solace of the veterans. And thus, in the course of a few years, was called into existence the most formidable of European armies. It was trained to exact obedience, governed with perfect order, and paid with punctilious regularity. It exulted in its own achievements, and gloried in the reputation of its chiefs. But, above all, it was enthusiastically devoted to the king. At their head he had frequently, in the sieges of fortified towns, claimed for himself the post of honour and of danger, and had not seldom accompanied and commanded them in the

camp. In his name every trophy was won. By him every substantial recompense was awarded; and by him, also, the honours of war were conferred with a majesty, a cordiality, and a grace, which immeasurably enhanced their value.

By these methods, or by such as these, Louis had acquired that great first instrument of all arbitrary power—a soldiery who had ceased to be citizens—who regarded the military service as the only path to wealth and eminence—and who sought renown by cultivating the favour, not of their fellow-subjects, but of their sovereign alone. The legionaires of the king of France were, at the same time, his prætorians; and to that irresistible armament the people in France had been brought into a willing, or rather an ostentatious, subjection.

For it was not embodied for the encounter with foreign enemies alone. It was the effective instrument of the royal will in every branch of the civil government. Soldiers were ever at hand to enforce the payment of public taxes. Soldiers were ever ready to compel obedience to the orders of the executive authority. Soldiers, as we lately saw, were employed, even as missionaries, to inculcate obedience to the spiritual dominion of Rome, by executing those dragonnades which brought into every Protestant dwelling every scourge which bigotry, licentiousness, and rapacity could inflict upon the wretched inhabitants.

Secondly. The civil government of France, under Louis XIV., acquired a concentration and an energy like that of some vast encampment. Eventually it became no empty boast, that he would be himself his own chief minister. After the death of Colbert and of Louvois, the other functionaries of the state were not merely his inferiors or his servants, but were, in

the proper sense of the word, his subordinates also. France was subject to his single will. The States General were extinct. The Provincial States, as we shall hereafter see, had ceased to meet. The Parliaments were silent and submissive. Taxes were imposed by royal edicts, in whatever form and to whatever amount seemed fit to the great autocrat, and were levied, without opposition, from his subjects. Throughout the provinces, the ancient administrators of the local government had given place to the intendants, who, originally appointed by Richelieu, had become the immediate delegates, in every part of the kingdom, of the vast prerogatives of the Crown.

The existing centralisation of power in France, so foreign to our own habits of thought and action, is as ancient as the days of Louis XIV.; and his introduction of it is still applauded by some even of those who, in the present times, have the most eloquently arraigned his despotism. They draw an impressive and a just comparison between the regularity, the method, and the efficiency of his system of internal rule, and the violence, the frauds, and the extravagance of the earlier system for which it was substituted; and if his people were really reduced by any inevitable necessity to the choice between the disorders of a dispersed and incoherent administration on the one hand, and the tyranny of a centralised government on the other, it must, indeed, be admitted, that he chose for them the lighter evil of the two. But of the real existence of any such necessity, I am not aware that any proof has been, or could be, given.

Thirdly. To secure to that central power its characteristic decision and promptitude, Louis became the founder of the police which has ever since exercised so great an influence in France. The chief

objects of that institution were, indeed, the prevention of crime and the maintenance of the public peace, but it was also designed to secure the royal authority against all secret conspiracies and intrigues; and with that view it was supported by a systematic espionage, and became a vast net, of which the minister of police held the strings, and which enclosed almost every member of society within its invisible meshes. D'Argenson was the Fouché of the 17th century.

Fourthly. The absolute powers of Louis XIV. were sustained by the ecclesiastical not less than by the other orders of his subjects. In virtue of the Concordat of August 1516, between Francis I. and Leo X., the king of France had become the patron of all episcopal sees, of all royal abbeys, and of many parochial benefices. By the skilful use of that patronage Louis was enabled to attach to his service and person every considerable family in his kingdom. Sometimes he bestowed the cure of souls upon laymen, in commendam. Sometimes he charged the revenues of particular churches with pensions for the support of his favourites. The abbeys became the appanages of noble lords, or of noble ladies. The mitres were almost invariably bestowed on men of high birth, but of mean fortunes. The temporalities of the Church were thus employed for the corruption of the world. The single mitigation of the evil was, that the sacerdotal aristocracy was composed of men whose hereditary rank secured for them a liberal education, elegant manners, and at least decorous lives. If, in the reign of Louis XIV., the mitre in the Gallican Church adorned the brows of no candidates for canonisation, it was very rarely disgraced by the scandalous habits, or open immoralities, of those who wore it. Nor were the French bishops much, or

often, involved in the cabals of worldly ambition. After the death of Mazarin, Louis entrusted no churchman with any considerable authority in the state; and though he confided the education of the Dauphin to Bossuet and to Fénélon, he did not invite, and would not have permitted, even these illustrious men to exert their genius and eloquence beyond the appropriate sphere of their sacred functions.

Fifthly. The nobility of France also were constrained to minister to the elevation of their sovereign, by a virtual abdication of their own. The ancient feudal chiefs had, indeed, long since disappeared, but the later Noblesse, of which Charles V. and Louis XI. were the founders, had, even from its origin, been subject to great indignities. Louis XI. ennobled not only the municipal officers of the great cities, but his own menial servant. Charles VIII., to the consternation of his age, granted the same honour to a bastard. Charles IX. sold patents of nobility by twenties and thirties at a time. Henry III. created 1000 new nobles in the single year, 1576; and, at last, a multitude of persons assumed the same rank by a mere lawless usurpation. Louis XIV. was the first to declare against the Noblesse and their privileges, that war which was at last to be triumphant in the Revolution. He instituted a severe inquiry into the validity of their pretensions to that rank, and persevered in pursuing it without regard to the bitter humiliations to which it subjected so many of the claimants of hereditary titles. He selected all the principal ministers of his crown from plebeian families; and, to induce the poor nobility to seek their maintenance by commercial pursuits, he published an edict, declaring that such occupations should derogate nothing from their rank and station in society.

The exhortation and the indulgence were alike indignantly rejected, and the words Chevalier d'Industrie, then first introduced into the French tongue, are said to be the record of the preference which many of those high-born persons gave to a descent into the high road with vizors and pistols, over a descent into the counting-house with pens and rulers. Their number was enormous, amounting, it is computed, to not less than 30,000 families. To deliver himself from that hungry and rapacious swarm, became one of the most serious embarrassments of the king. After largely increasing the establishment of officers in the army for their relief, he at length embodied whole corps, composed exclusively of these indigent gentlemen. The result was, to place himself at the head of the most costly, irascible, intrepid, and intelligent force in Europe. But it was a school in which the proudest learnt the great lesson of obedience. For even when not under arms, the most ancient and illustrious duke was compelled to yield precedence to the youngest maréchal de France.

While the necessitous aristocracy were thus tamed in the camp, or destroyed in the field of battle, the more affluent were attracted to the court by other motives. Thither came the rural lords from Auvergne, or Britany, or Provence; for, to withhold that homage, was to provoke the royal displeasure and the ridicule of society. Thither came also the noble aspirants after honours, preferment, pleasure, or fashion; for of these the court was the seat and centre. There they sacrificed their independence, and squandered their resources, in dress, and equipages, and gallantry, and gaming; and there they repaired those losses by the acceptance of royal gratuities, bestowed on them in every form the best calculated

to mortify the pride of rank, and to wound all honest feelings of self-respect. And there also Louis, the most accomplished of gentlemen, habitually exacted and received from the noblest of his realm, adulations and menial services better becoming the palace of Ispahan than the château of Versailles. The individual nobles who, in the reign of Louis XIII., had aspired to a competition with the royal authority, had been crushed by the iron hand of Richelieu. Their order itself was degraded by the fourteenth Louis into a band of mercenary soldiers, or of servile courtiers.

Sixthly. The magistracy also was rendered tributary to his absolute power. The Parliaments had, to no inconsiderable extent, succeeded to the authority of the States General; and under the shelter of legal forms exercised, at least, a suspensive veto on all royal ordinances, and, especially, on all fiscal edicts. Destitute as they were of all material force, they had long possessed a moral power, to which the power of the sword rendered a reluctant and almost unconscious obeisance; and the brightest page of French history is that which records the courage, the disinterestedness, and the learning of that company of pedantic lawyers. But from his boyhood Louis had been taught to regard them with antipathy and contempt. He was but seventeen years old when, entering that venerable assembly booted and spurred, and (it is usually added) insolently brandishing his riding-whip, he dissolved their meeting, forbade them ever again to prefer any remonstrance to him, and commanded them to confine themselves strictly within the limits of their judicial office; nor, during the remainder of his long reign, did he once condescend to solicit or to acccept their advice. Excluded from their political functions, they found in

the assiduous discharge of their duties as judges, a shelter from indignities and danger; and, ceasing to be the antagonists of the king, they became the instruments of his absolute dominion. Before their tribunal he could humble the proudest grandees of France. By their concurrence he could impart a seeming legality to his taxation; and, by their agency, he was able to carry into execution all the severe and formidable provisions of his penal code of 1670. A more convenient bulwark could, indeed, hardly have been interposed between an arbitrary throne and the discontents of the people; for, existing as they did, not by popular representation, but by the appointment of the Crown, the public indignation could always be readily directed against them, while they were altogether dependent on the sovereign for support against it.

Seventhly. The Tiers Etat, or Commons of France, were, at this time, in a state of abject insignificance and political impotency. They bore nearly the whole burden of direct taxation, they performed the corvées, or personal services on the public roads, and they lived under all the pressure of the feudal tenures, and of the yet subsisting seigniorial jurisdictions. The incorporated towns alone retained the ancient forms of civic liberty, and the semblance of their ancestral franchises. But these forms and semblances had survived the once living realities. Louis, as we formerly saw, claimed and exercised the right of superseding the elected municipal officers, to make way for officers of his own appointment, and those appointments he disposed of at a kind of public auction. In this manner he put up to sale, in 1681, all the employments at the Hôtel de Ville at Paris; and eleven years later he displaced, in favour of his

own nominees, the elected mayors and judicial assessors of every other city in France except Lyons. To enhance the price of the more considerable of these civic offices, he sometimes sold with them hereditary patents of nobility, and sometimes he consented to leave a commune in possession of its electoral franchises, in consideration of the payment of a sum of money sufficient to indemnify him against what he lost by that forbearance. The extent of this abuse will be best illustrated by a single example. It is that of the city of Rennes, where, in the course of fourteen years, the king created and sold nineteen royal offices in the militia of the city, all the seats in the civic tribunals, five employments in the local police, with two in the fiscal and one in the legal departments; nor must it be omitted that, in the list of this royal merchandise, the king was not ashamed to include the office of house porter to the Hôtel de Ville. If Louis the Fat and Louis the Saint are really entitled to the glory of having founded municipal liberty in France, Louis the Great is much more clearly entitled to the reproach of having destroyed it.

Eighthly. In a preceding lecture I adverted to the absolute dependence into which Louis had reduced the men of letters of France. It was a conquest even yet more essential than any of the rest to the maintenance of his personal supremacy. It gave him the greatest of all powers—the power of directing and controlling public opinion. It gave him, as the instruments of that power, an assemblage of writers who, even if inferior in genius to the philosophers, poets, and dramatists, who have conferred immortal renown on the ages of Lorenzo and of Elizabeth, were still decidedly their superiors in the gift of

forming and captivating the taste of their fellow-countrymen in their own and all succeeding generations. When Boileau was as profuse in panegyric on Louis, as in satire on all other men—when Molière who laughed at everybody else worshipped him—when Racine's devotion to his Creator was reconciled with the idolatry of his king—when La Rochefoucauld, in his "indictment against human nature," could find place for encomiums on that one bright exception—when the eloquence of Bossuet could stoop from its loftiest flights to celebrate the virtues of his royal patron—when both the learning of the Benedictines, and the piety of the Port Royalists, rendered a devout homage to the great monarch—and when the casuistry of the Jesuits apologised for his offences, how could it be but that every meaner voice should join in the loud chorus of adulation, which, during more than half a century, never ceased to extol the courage, the wisdom, the genius, and the triumphs of the universal idol? And how could it be but that he who inhaled the fumes of such sacrifices, offered to him by such a priesthood, should yield his better reason to that intoxicating influence, and believe himself to be that miracle of nature which they delineated? I doubt the truth, for I cannot ascertain the authority, of the story, that William III. indignantly repelled the plaudits of a theatre by the question, "Do the idiots mistake me for the king of France?" But, even if untrue, it is no inapt illustration of the then prevailing opinion of the extent and of the value of the flatteries which Louis was accustomed to receive, and to welcome, from his subjects.

The two foundations of the absolute throne of Louis XIV. were, therefore, terror and admiration:

the terror of a power which had subjugated the army, the church, the magistracy, the noblesse, and the municipalities—the admiration of a power to which literature and art, arms and fortune, rendered their richest and their uninterrupted tribute. King-worship had never before taken so entire a possession of any Christian state. Never had the luxurious pomp of an oriental court been so intimately and so long associated with the energies, the refined tastes, and the intellectual culture of an European sovereignty. During fifty successive years, Louis continued to be the greatest actor on the noblest stage, and in the presence of the most enthusiastic audience, of the world. At how boundless an expense of toil and treasure that representation was conducted—how it was continued even in the midst of famine and all other national calamities—and how the gorgeous drama of Versailles was relieved by the yet more animating spectacle of military triumphs, or darkened by gloom of military reverses, is known to all who have read even the most familiar accounts of the Siècle de Louis Quatorze.

To substitute, however, for that general impression a more definite view of the principal results of this absolute dominion, it may be convenient to advert, however briefly, to the financial consequences of the wars into which Louis plunged—to the character of his diplomatic relations with all other powers—to the fiscal calamities induced by his waste of the national resources in maintaining the pomp and luxuries of his court—to the effect of that lavish expenditure on the morals and manners of his age—to the iniquitous persecutions into which the possession of unrestrained power hurried him—and to the

manner in which the abuse of that power contributed to the eventual subversion of his dynasty.

First, then, the wars of Louis with the other powers of Europe were commenced on four different occasions between the death of Mazarin and the Peace of Utretcht, and, on each of those occasions, the French historians themselves being the judges, were unprovoked and unjustifiable. As he thought on that subject, so he wrote. "Self-aggrandisement," he informs his grandson, "is at once the noblest, and the most agreeable, occupation of kings." But he affected rather the glory of a conqueror, than the reputation of a general. He invariably declined a battle in the field with his enemies, apparently because he would not run the risk of compromising his majesty by the indignities of a possible defeat. He as invariably availed himself of every opportunity of undertaking in person the siege of the strongest cities, because, in such enterprises, the genius of Vauban, and of his other engineers, assured him of a rich harvest of renown. But, ere long, he wisely abandoned to his officers the conduct of his armies. His keen sense of ridicule taught him that a king of France could not, in imitation of a Persian sophy, carry with him to the wars his courtiers, and courtezans, and mimes, and cooks, and sideboards, and stage scenery, without provoking from the wits and jesters missiles to which even his artillery could make no effectual answer. He therefore withdrew from the camp the luxuries of his court, but not without drawing to his court much of the licentiousness of the camp. A great, though not an intolerable, evil; but the evil of his habitually maintaining those vast encampments was such as could be endured neither by his neighbours, nor by his people. It is with

hesitation, because it is with a full knowledge, how great are the fallacies to which statistics so often give shelter, that I transcribe the common estimate of the number and the cost of his great armaments. It represents the standing army of Louis as having amounted to 400,000 men under arms, or, as I rather understand the statement on the muster rolls, and it assures us that, for the support of the ten campaigns of the war of 1688, the French treasury disbursed between forty and forty-one millions of pounds sterling, and between eighty-one and eighty-two millions of the same money on account of the twelve campaigns of the war of 1701. Prodigal as such a waste of treasure may seem, well had it been for mankind if that waste had been the most calamitous result of those campaigns; but, to the disgrace of our common Christianity, and of our common nature, History has a far darker tale to tell, of the utter ruin and desolation, by the armies of Louis, of the defenceless cities of Spires, Worms, and Oppenheim, of all the territories of Treves and Baden, and of all the towns, villages, and hamlets of the Palatinate, and of the unarmed inhabitants of those once smiling regions —crimes which, as they were wantonly perpetrated in cold blood, and by one Christian and civilised people upon another, threw into the shade the worst ravages of Attila or Genseric, and almost challenged a comparison with the atrocities of the day of St. Bartholomew.

Nor was the character of his diplomatic relations with other powers more defensible. In his pursuit of that "noblest and most agreeable occupation of kings—self-aggrandisement," Louis not only violated all the laws of nations, and of humanity, in his warfare with his enemies, but was deliberately, and on

principle, regardless of the obligations of good faith towards his allies. "In dispensing with the exact observance of treaties (such is the language of his instructions to the Dauphin) we do not," he says, "violate them; for the language of such instruments is never to be understood literally. We must employ, in our treaties, a conventional phraseology, just as we use complimentary expressions in society. They are indispensable to our intercourse with one another, but they always mean much less than they say."—"The more unusual, circumspect, and reiterated were the clauses by which the Spaniards excluded me from assisting Portugal, the more evident it is that the Spaniards did not believe that I should really withhold such assistance."

Machiavelli never taught a more dissolute doctrine, nor Escobar a more convenient sophistry; nor did Molière ever ascribe to his Mascarilles a greater proficiency in imposture, than Louis XIV. thus openly avows and attributes to himself. Nor did he write thus to amuse himself with a barren theory, or a pleasant exaggeration. He actually rendered to Portugal the aid which he had just engaged to withhold from her. He established a title to the states of Lorraine, and to the cities of Colmar, Strasbourg, and Casal, by artifices at which Gil Blas de Santillane would have been scandalised. He despoiled the Duchesse de Montpensier of her vast inheritance, by a stratagem better befitting the bachelor of Salamanca than a great king. At the moment he was bribing Charles II. to betray his people, he was also exciting the remnant of the Cromwellians to revolt against Charles.

But neither the deceits, nor the injustice, of Louis irritated mankind so profoundly as his insolence. His statue, at the feet of which all nations were exhi-

bited, crouching and in chains, represented to the admiring Parisians the haughty spirit of their sovereign, not less distinctly than his noble person. He avenged the slightest shadow of an imaginable wrong by the most galling insults. From such indignities Genoa was not rescued by her weakness, nor Holland by the advantages, political and commercial, of her alliance, nor Rome by the religious veneration rendered to her pontiffs. And therefore, when Philip II. and Louis XIV. had both, at length, been humbled before the same Batavian marshes, the nations of Europe exulted more in the overthrow of the arrogance which had made war with the United Provinces, to punish the discourtesy of a medallist and a gazetteer, than in the defeat of the bigotry which had decimated the Dutch people to establish the Inquisition.

If the immutable laws of God had not decreed that such wars, however successful, should be followed by a fearful rebound of misery against the aggressors, this earth would not be habitable. The French nation never recovered the waste of strength and treasure in the campaigns of their once idolised monarch, until his dynasty and his institutions had been subverted in the same common ruin. To this day they have never effectually recovered the wounds inflicted on their national self-esteem by the humiliations of the war of the Spanish succession. And yet neither the loss nor the shame incurred by those disastrous conflicts were so deeply injurious to the subjects of Louis, as the fiscal calamities induced by his waste of the resources of his people in maintaining the pomp and luxuries of his court.

Among the many conjectural estimates of the sums squandered by him on fêtes, gardens, palaces, gratuities, unmerited pensions, and other prodigalities, it is

difficult to make any confident preference. But the highest of them will scarcely seem incredible to the readers of Danjeau and St. Simon, or to those who contemplate the sumptuous edifices which still embellish Paris, and Marly, and Versailles, and least of all to those who bear in mind the economical illusions under which he acted.

Those illusions taught him that his extravagance was not only not injurious, but positively beneficial to his subjects. When Madame de Maintenon solicited him to relieve the mendicants who thronged his palace gates, he made what M. Say calls "that precious and terrible answer, which taught how to ruin a nation upon principle." "A large expenditure," he said, "is the almsgiving of kings," and he gave such alms until France had nearly been reduced to one vast receptacle for paupers.

His fiscal measures, after the death of Colbert, attest the utmost extremity of distress. The invention of stamp duties, and the creation and sale of an oppressive monopoly of tobacco, were comparatively unimportant. Far more burdensome was the duty on all alienations of land, with the auxiliary enactment, that no lease should be made to continue in force for more than nine years from its date, that so the alienation tax might be exigible at the end of every such term. Yet more vexatious still were his taxes on marriages and baptisms, and on all the other great transactions of life, which provoked the abandonment of all religious ordinances in those provinces in which they did *not* provoke partial insurrections. But of all the imposts of the bewildered monarch, the most offensive and intolerable was the royal tithe. In the midst of his military pursuits, Marshal Vauban had devised a plan for substituting

a tax of ten per cent. on the annual income of all immoveable property, for a multitude of more vexatious and less profitable duties. Under the shelter of the name of that great man, Louis promulgated an edict for giving effect to this project; but with the difference, that whereas the Marshal of France had contemplated a royal tithe in exchange for other burdens, the king of France imposed it in addition to them. Nor was this all. The money borrowed on the credit of those revenues created a national debt, which, when due allowance is made for the value of money in that age, appears stupendous even now with all our lamentable familiarity with such subjects. I reject, indeed, as a mere extravagance, though I know not how to reduce to the level of truth, the statement that it amounted to no less than 200,000,000*l.* sterling. But the acceptance of such an exaggeration by writers not habitually credulous or inaccurate, is itself some proof that the real amount of the burden transmitted by Louis to his descendants, was such as was best expressed by hyperbole, in the absence of any exact means of knowledge.

The more prominent results of this extravagance were perceptible to the contemporary memorialists of the court and times of Louis XIV. Smuggling became a trade in which none were ashamed, and few were afraid, to engage. Whole bodies of cavalry deserted their ranks to take their share in it. On the northern and eastern frontiers, the half-famished garrisons were in revolt. At the beginning, as at the close, of the 18th century, the place d'armes in front of the château of Versailles was thronged with hordes of destitute people clamorous for relief. At length Louis the Magnificent himself was driven by want to Paris, humbly to sue, in person, for loans at an

extortionate usury from Samuel Bernard, and the other money-lenders of his capital.

But to those who had eyes to see, and hearts to understand, there were perceptible still more impressive proofs than these, of the calamities in which the prodigality of a king may involve his people. Wanton wars and heartless luxuries had corrupted the moral sense of that voluptuous court. The theatre of Paris, at this day, would not tolerate the tone in which, at that time, the great Molière mocked at conjugal fidelity in comedies written for the theatre of Versailles. The great monarch himself violated that duty openly and ostentatiously. He raised to the line of succession to his crown, the sons borne to him by the wives of other men, while his own wife was still living. That gaming flourished there, to the most extravagant excess, we know from the strange avowals of the courtly Dangeau; but, unaided by the caustic St. Simon, who would have conjectured that, in those splendid halls, a fraudulent gamester could be regarded in the light of an ingenious, pleasant companion? He tells us of a duke who frequented the royal circle, and who, he says, "was better liked by the king, and had more influence in society than any body. He was," proceeds our author, "magnificent in every thing and a great gambler, and did not pique himself in fair dealing in his play; but many other great lords did the same, and only laughed at it." The ladies also, as we learn from the same authority, imitated the example. But the female conscience had, it seems, a peculiar tenderness on the subject of cheating at cards. No lady could think of retaining such unrighteous gains. No sooner had she touched them than she religiously gave them all away. But then, it must be added, the gift was always made to some other winner of her own

sex. By carefully avoiding the words, "interchange of winnings," the fair casuists seem also to have avoided all self-reproach, and to have had an easy escape with their discreet and lenient confessors. In this singular society were young gentlemen also, who relieved the tame formalities of other conversation by admitting to their tables and familiar intercourse notorious criminals, who had animating stories to tell of their own desperate achievements as forgers, or as highwaymen. And young and old were alike engaged in that scandalous traffic in penalties and forfeitures, which Mr. Macaulay has so vividly depicted in his portraiture of the court of James II.

Among the victims of the law in France, there were always to be found both the innocent and the rich. To multiply their number, was to open a vein of wealth to many a necessitous sycophant of the court. As the miner of California to some newly discovered digging, or the vulture of those regions to the scent of some recent carcass, so hurried the lords, and even the ladies, of Versailles in search of forgotten penalties, or uncollected forfeitures, or obsolete offences, for which the offenders might still be subjected to fines or confiscations. Sometimes the whole of any such game, when hunted down, was thrown by the lavish king to the informers; sometimes he himself participated in the spoil. There were not wanting cases in which even the princesses of his house were enabled, by such resources, to repay the expenditure of the wardrobe and the gaming table. The Duke of Orleans is said to have extracted a million of livres from an officer in charge of the military chest, who had been made over to him to be subjected to the *peine forte et dure* of a judicial process. In this crusade against wealthy criminals, the only persons who

were absolutely excluded from the field were the destitute kindred, who were to partake of the ruin, though they had not partaken of the guilt, of the offenders.

It is said by M. Lemontey, that it was at this period that the word "honnête" exchanged its primitive for its actual meaning in the French vocabulary; that, till the latter half of the reign of Louis, an "honnête homme" was the name for an upright, not for an inoffensive, man; that, when a man's descent was said to be honnête, he was complimented on the virtuousness of his progenitors, not reminded of the mediocrity of their condition; and that, when his family were described as honnête, it was an acknowledgment that they belonged to the middle ranks of society, not a suggestion that they were plebeians. If the remark be accurate, it is a curious instance of the connection between philology and history, and of the influence of the French court on the vernacular language of France.

But the most impressive record of the misgovernment of Louis is to be found in those religious persecutions into which he was hurried by the possession of an absolute and irresponsible power. On the woes which he inflicted on his Protestant subjects I have already spoken. But even the members of his own religious communion had terrible penalties to pay for any dissent from his opinions. At the distance of three leagues from Versailles stood the splendid church and monastery of Port Royal des Champs, where dwelt the Mère Angélique and her saintly sisterhood, and near them Pascal, Arnauld, Nicole, De Sacy, and their illustrious fraternity. Those learned men had declared themselves unable to find in the "Augustinus," a posthumous work of

Cornelius Jansen, bishop of Yprés, five propositions, which the Pope had discovered there, and had censured as heretical. Those holy women, being unable to read the Latin in which the book was written, had refused to affirm, either under their hands or with their lips, that those propositions might be found there by those who could read it. For these offences the king dispersed the whole of the brethren of Port Royal, and exiled many of them, levelled the monastery to the ground, exhumed and gave to the dogs the dead bodies of such of the fraternity as had been buried there, and committed the survivors to an imprisonment from which death alone released them.

If the picture which I have thus laid before you of the administration of the government of France by Louis XIV. be indeed accurate, how, it may be asked, could it happen that no voices were raised in his own times and country to anticipate the reproaches of posterity? There were assuredly not wanting many men wise enough to perceive such evils, or courageous enough to protest against them. Why, then, were no such remonstrances raised?

I answer, first, by referring to the explanation which I gave in a former lecture of the methods by which literature had been not merely silenced on all political questions, but had been brought by the court into a dependence which was the more servile, because it was willingly, and even ostentatiously, borne. I answer, next, by denying the statement that the silence of the great men of France, on these subjects, was as complete as it is usually supposed to have been. Amongst such men a very high place is due to Fénélon, and to his pupil, the Duc de Bourgogne. Now every one is agreed that the romance of Télémaque was designed to point out to the

heir to the Crown of France some of the enormous abuses of the government of his grandfather. But the Télémaque is neither the only, nor the most impressive, of the protests made on that subject by its eloquent author.

It is impossible to state with precision what was the date of the letter from Fénélon to Louis XIV., which is to be found in the 8th volume of the works of D'Alembert, although it is certain that it was written after the death of Louvois in 1691. In her preface to Danjeau's Memoirs, Madame de Genlis has, indeed, disputed the authenticity of that letter altogether. She supposes it to have been forged by the sceptical philosopher who first gave it to the world; and she suggests that he was prompted to commit this crime, by his desire to give to his own disloyal principles, the apparent sanction of one of the most revered of the divines of France, who was, at the same time, one of the holiest of her saints, and one of the most considerable of her men of letters. To myself the imputation appears altogether incredible. It was in his official character of secretary to the Royal Academy, that D'Alembert published his Eloge on Fénélon, and the letter which is appended to it. To have been detected in the fraud imputed to him, would have been to expose himself to infamy and ruin; and the detection would have been perfectly easy, as he declared his manuscript of the letter in question to be authenticated by the handwriting of the Archbishop of Cambray himself. Little respect is, indeed, due to the political or religious principles of D'Alembert, but he was neither wicked enough, nor foolish enough, to expose himself to so terrible a risk, merely to gratify himself by blackening the reputation of a deceased monarch. Madame de Genlis' suspicions

are also, I think, repelled by her own elaborate and indignant demonstration of the exact harmony between the supposed letter and many passages of the Télémaque. I, therefore, suppose it to be genuine, and I think that the following extracts from it, will demonstrate that one of the most profound and of the closest observers of what was passing in the court and kingdom of Louis XIV., regarded his administration of the government of France in a light even more unfavourable than that in which I have hitherto represented it.

"He who takes the liberty, sire," such is the commencement of the letter, "to address this communication to you, is one for whom the interests of this world have but little value. He is not prompted to write by pique, by ambition, nor by the wish to intermeddle in great affairs. Though you know not who he is, he loves you, and reveres in your person the delegated authority of God himself." . . . . . "Be not surprised if he addresses you in terms of unusual emphasis. He does so because truth is at once free and fearless; but to truth you have not been accustomed to listen."

"Your heart is naturally just and equitable. But they who had the charge of your education taught you, as your only principles of government, to be suspicious, and jealous, and haughty; to keep virtue aloof, to dread all eminent merit, to prefer the society of the flexible and the cringing, and to cherish an exclusive regard to your own personal interests."

"During the last thirty years, your chief ministers have deranged and reversed all the ancient maxims of our government, in order to elevate your authority, or rather that they might increase their own; for that authority was not really in your hands, but in

theirs. The state and the laws are no more mentioned amongst us. The king and the royal pleasure are now all in all. Your ministers have infinitely extended both your revenue and your expenditure. They have extolled you to the heavens for having eclipsed the splendour of all your predecessors; or, in other words, for having impoverished the whole kingdom, that so you might introduce into your court a luxury alike monstrous and incurable."

"You have, indeed, been jealous of your authority; too much so, perhaps, in whatever relates to mere externals; but, within his own appropriate province, each of your ministers has in reality been your master. Because you marked out the limits of the respective functions of those who really conducted your government, you imagined that you were yourself governing. They have been severe, haughty, unjust, violent, faithless. Whether in governing at home, or in negotiating with foreign powers, their only system has been that of menacing, crushing, and annihilating their opponents. They have habituated you to flatteries so outrageous, and even so idolatrous, that your own honour required your indignant rejection of them. They have rendered your name odious to the people of France, and insufferable to your neighbours."

Then, after an exposure of the injustice of the wars and conquests of Louis, the writer proceeds. "Enough, sire, has been said to show you that, during your whole life, you have been wandering from the path of justice and of truth, and, therefore, from the path which the gospel prescribes. That long series of fearful calamities which have desolated the whole of Europe during the last twenty years, the blood so profusely shed, the multitude of the

scandals which have been given, the cities and the villages laid in ashes, have been the lamentable results of that war of 1672, which was undertaken for your glory, and for the confusion of the gazetteers and medallists of Holland."

"Your people, whom you are bound to love as your children, and who have been enthusiastically devoted to you, are dying of hunger. The land is nearly thrown out of cultivation. The cities and the country are depopulated. All trades are languishing, and unable to afford subsistence to the artisans. All commerce is extinguished. In order to make and to defend your vast external conquests, you have destroyed one half of the internal resources of your kingdom. All France is but one great hospital, desolate, and unprovided with the necessaries of life. It is yourself, sire, by whom these disasters have been created. In the ruin of France, every thing has passed into your hands, and your subjects are reduced to live upon your bounty."

"You do not love God. You do not even fear him, except with a servile terror. It is not God you fear, but hell. Your religion is made up of superstitions, and of petty superficial observances. Scrupulous about trifles, you are untouched by the most terrible responsibilities. Your own glory, your own advantage, are the real and only objects of your love. You refer everything to yourself, as though you were the very God of this earth, and as though everything else in it had been called into existence, only that it might serve as a sacrifice to you."

Then follow very unfavourable portraits of the Archbishop of Paris, of La Chaise, the confessor of the King; of Madame de Maintenon, and of his other confidential advisers, with a denunciation of their in-

fidelity to that great trust. "Perhaps," proceeds the letter, "you may ask what they, who are thus in your confidence, ought to say to you. I answer they ought to say thus: — 'Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, if you would not that God should humble you. Submit to the humiliation of making peace, and so expiate the glory which you have made your idol. Listen no more to the counsels of your flatterers. Restore to your enemies the conquests which you cannot retain with safety, or without injustice.' Sire, he who tells you these truths, is so far from being an enemy to your real interests, that he would lay down his life to see you such as God would have you to be; nor does he ever cease to pray for you."

Although I credit D'Alembert's assertion, that he transcribed this letter from a manuscript authenticated by Fénélon himself, yet there is no proof that it was ever transmitted to Louis, or that he ever saw it, or heard of it. For the credit of the king, I would gladly believe the story that it was conveyed to him by Beauvilliers at the instance of the writer; for if it be really the fact, that he received such a communication from the tutor of his grandson, and afterwards promoted him to the archbishopric of Cambray, we must all admit with D'Alembert that, for once at least, he nobly earned the title of "the Great."

I have stated that the Duc de Bourgogne was one of those who felt and acknowledged the abuses of the government of his grandfather. I do not, of course, mean that he ever assumed the indecorous and undutiful office of a censor of the conduct of Louis XIV. Nothing could have been more repugnant to the spirit of that admirable prince, or to the lessons

which he had received from Fénélon. But the Télémaque was written for his instruction, and in the imaginary court of Idomenée, the Duke unavoidably recognised the image of the court of Versailles. The impression left on his mind by that, and by the similar lessons of his Mentor, was profound and lasting. He had a clear view of the evils under which France was labouring. He had a distinct foresight of the coming tempest, and an ardent desire to avert it. Amongst the papers which he left behind him, was one which attests how deeply these subjects had engaged his thoughts. It was a complete scheme of constitutional reformation. It contemplated the revival of the States General, and of the states of the various provinces, and the periodical convention of assemblies of the people in every canton of France. On the basis of these central and local institutions, and through their agencies, he hoped to provide at once for the stability of the throne, and for the good government of the people with their own support and concurrence.

If the Duc de Bourgogne had been permitted to ascend that throne, and to carry his project into execution, what would have been the probable results of it? If the answer to that question were to be given by persons imbued with the spirit of our own government, it would probably express their conviction that such a reform would have given to France the greatest blessings for which any nation could be indebted to the sagacity and patriotism of its rulers. By such critics it would be applauded as a well-devised bond for the indissoluble union of the past, of the present, and of the future—as calling into healthful activity all those popular instincts and local attachments which constitute the main springs

of the life and health of a great nation—as rendering tributary to the service of the state those home feelings, which, of all feelings, act with the most constant and irresistible energy—as affording to the various sections of the commonwealth the means of an invigorating yet amicable rivalry—as productive of that social harmony of which the indispensable basis is to be found only in diversity and in contrast—as providing for that concentration of power without which the state is impotent, and for that diffusion of power without which the central dominion must be despotic—and, above all, as affording the means of acquiring those habits of self-government which constitute the ultimate perfection of any civil polity.

All such anticipations and predictions would however, I suppose, have been derided by the French philosophers of that age, if they partook of the philosophical opinions which most find favour in France in our own. M. Alexandre Thomas, for example, the author of a book published in the year 1844, under the title of "Une Province sous Louis XIV.," would smile at such reveries as the dreams of narrow-minded men, by whom the region of pure ideas had ever been, and must ever be, unvisited. For in that book he describes the state of Burgundy, from 1661 to 1715, in order to establish the conclusions that the institutions of that province, and that the French provincial institutions in general, in the reign of Louis XIV., were so entirely and irremediably absurd, that they never could have served as the foundations of any safe or salutary national reformation. M. Thomas is no ordinary writer. When he addresses himself to the arrangement of evidence, and to the narration of facts, he combines much of our

English good sense with no less of the buoyant vivacity of a Frenchman. But when he unveil his theories, and writes as a philosopher, his style undergoes an extraordinary change. Between the glare of his eloquence and the darkness of his metaphysics, my own mental vision, at least, is effectually dazzled and overpowered. Nevertheless, as both his facts and his theories have a direct and very important bearing on any judgment we can form on the administration of the government of Louis XIV., I will not decline the attempt to indicate, though in as few words as possible, what are the discoveries, philosophical and historical, for which his readers are to be prepared.

I collect then, that, according to the doctrine of M. Thomas, there is a certain general law which regulates the progress of political society. Emerging from chaos, where its elements battle with each other in wild confusion, it makes a stedfast, though it may be a tardy, progress towards that perfect symmetry and order in which its ultimate perfection consists. Thus the anarchy of the tenth and eleventh centuries was the chaotic period of France. Out of that abyss first arose the feudal oligarchy — a state of orderly disorder. Then succeeded the Capetian despotism, destined to crush one after another of the countless feudal privileges, whether local and personal, — whether corporate and municipal, — whether legislative, administrative, or judicial, which, as so many conflicting wrongs, were arrayed one against another in unappeasable hostility. When the iron grasp of "royalty" had subdued and annihilated them all, then "royalty," in the midst of the triumphs she had won, presented herself to the nation, in the person of Louis XIV., as the one

gigantic privilege, the conqueror and the survivor of all the rest. Her "mission" was now fulfilled; and when at last the indignant nation raised her voice in anger, "royalty," confessing her own inherent weakness, bowed her head and fell. Then appeared a long succession of revolutionary systems, each of which, in turn, made some great stride towards that ultimate consummation of symmetry and order which form the perfection of political society. Distant as that perfection may appear to some, yet France has already attained, by the overthrow of all privileges—to unity, that is, to the concentration of power in the supreme government,—to equality, that is, the absolute uniformity of the political franchises of all citizens,—and to liberty, that is, the sovereign dominion of the people themselves. Unity, equality, and liberty are, therefore, those mighty and unrivalled powers, under the guidance of which France is advancing towards that high estate of national greatness and of social harmony towards which no other European people have as yet light enough even to aspire.

Perhaps the high tone of M. Thomas' colouring might have been subdued a little if he had postponed the publication of his book from 1844 to 1848. But the new shapes which unity, equality, and liberty assumed in the last of those years, would have detracted nothing from the value of the facts by which he undertakes to show how desperate and irremediable was the misgovernment of the French provinces during the reign of Louis XIV. I shall not, of course, affect to compress the results of such extensive inquiries into the fragment of time which remains at my disposal to-day. But neither can I entirely pass them over, for they are of the utmost importance in resolving the question—whether Louis

XIV. was more wise in extinguishing the privileges of the provinces of France, or the Duc de Bourgogne in regarding them as the ready basis on which to erect a free constitutional government?

It appears then, from the researches of M. Thomas, that, in the 17th century, the généralité of Bourgogne comprised, first, the duchy of that name, then five counties, and, finally, three pays d'élection. The duchy and counties were under the immediate government of the Burgundian States General during their sessions; and, in the intervals of those sessions, they were under the government of officers called élus. The Burgundian States General were composed of the clergy and the nobility of the duchy, and of the deputies of the Tiers Etat. Each of the five counties sent thither deputies, representing the Tiers Etat of each. But the pays d'élection were not so represented. They were under the immediate government of the Crown.

The sessions of the Burgundian States General were holden once only in each three years, and were continued during about twenty days. Thus, with the exception of about three weeks in as many years, the duchy and the counties were destitute of any representative government, but lived under the authority of the élus.

Each order appointed its own élu, and other officers, called alcades, who were to superintend and to control them. Each county had, in the same manner, a separate assembly, which appointed the élu for the county. There were also royal officers having the same title of élus, who were associated with the nominees of the States General and of the county assemblies.

Over all this official hierarchy presided the governor of the province of Burgundy, who represented the person of the king himself, and was invested with his prerogatives. In the 17th century, this government had passed into the hands of the great and powerful family of Condé, who held it with an authority not very remote from that with which, in earlier times, the princes of the royal house had held their appanages.

This scheme of provincial administration already appears sufficiently complicated; but the want of symmetry, and what may be called logical method, was still more remarkable in the composition of the Burgundian States General. Our own ancient anomalies of the deserted mount of Old Sarum, or the highly ornamented park and gardens of Gatton, sending each two members to the House of Commons, when the great manufacturing cities of the north sent no members at all, were not more strange than the anomalies according to which the Burgundian states were constituted. They comprised between 400 and 500 members, of whom 72 only were commoners, the rest being clergy or nobles, who were not elected by their respective orders, but who held their seats *proprio jure*. Then, again, no one was eligible as a deputy of the Tiers Etat, unless he were a mayor or one of the chief échevins of a city; and of the two deputies representing the same place, one only had a vote. Neither could the deputies of the Tiers Etat select their élus and alcades at their pleasure. They were bound to choose them from the citizens of particular cities, according to a rotation, of which some cities had the benefit only on each alternate election, and of which other cities had so little share, that they might be said to be almost wholly excluded.

These anomalies (and many more which I omit) were reducible to no assignable principle whatever, but had their roots only in obsolete traditions and inveterate prejudices, and the proceedings of the States General were marked by a corresponding instability of purpose and of character. During the reign of Louis XIV., the hero of their history is Nicholas Brulart. He was the member of one of those high judicial families which transmitted, from one generation to another, the presidency of the sovereign courts; and Brulart, therefore, at the age of thirty-four, found himself first president of the Parliament of Dijon. In that capacity he acquired great renown by his inflexible opposition to the commands of Mazarin. Having been sent to Perpignan as a prisoner, for refusing to register some of the edicts of the cardinal, he was released, and when the Prince de Condé again tendered to him the obnoxious edicts, "M. le Prince," was his celebrated answer, "the towers of Perpignan are distinctly visible from the place where we stand." In fact, Brulart was the very ideal of a French magistrate, really independent in his spirit, and not without a certain theatrical sublimity of demeanour and of discourse. But when Mazarin died, and Louis XIV. announced himself as his own chief minister, Brulart became an altered man. No longer sententious and epigrammatic about the dignity of his judicial character, and the majesty of his office, he became an eloquent vindicator of the absolute and irresponsible authority of the young sovereign. Nor was this servility or baseness. Brulart, looking on the scene before him with the eye of a statesman, as statesmen went in those days, seems to have been sincerely convinced that the power and greatness of the state were inextricably bound up with the unrestricted power

and independence of the king. In the name of the Burgundian States General, and as their president, he delivered a series of discourses, the general tone of which may be fairly inferred from the following extract from one of them:—

"The king being the first, and the permanent, spring of all tranquillity and virtue in his dominions, every thing within them follows his impulse, and derives its character from him. Every profession is adorned by his virtues. The sciences are advanced, manners are purified, and religion is at length in repose; the calm is profound, the law is obeyed, the people are tranquil and happy under his government; and all these blessings are the fruit of that sublime composure of mind with which he regulates all these interests, and watches over them all."

Such, during the twenty prosperous years of the reign of Louis, was the style of the States General of Burgundy, and of Brulart their president, in all their communications to the king, or to his representative. They were content to follow the chariot-wheels of the conqueror, and to swell the loud chorus of adulation. But with the reverses of Louis XIV., the language of the Burgundian States General underwent a total revolution. Eulogy gave place to bitter remonstrance, and the idol of yesterday became the object of the obloquies of to-day. M. Thomas pursues, in full detail, the history of these vicissitudes, and then pursuing the career of the communes of Burgundy and of the Parliament of Dijon, convicts them all, in turn, of that instability of character, caprice, and unreasonableness, from which I suppose few such bodies would be found to be exempt, if their portraits were delineated with equal fidelity, and by as picturesque a pen. The particular inference is, that petty passions and local

prejudices, unsettled principles and fluctuating opinions, narrow privileges and warring interests, disqualified the States General of Burgundy for the position assigned to them by the Duc de Bourgogne in his meditated constitution of France. The more general inference is, that as the States General of the other provinces were in no essential respect superior to those of Burgundy, the Duke's scheme rested altogether on a foundation of sand.

To a certain extent I am not disposed to controvert or to doubt this conclusion. On the contrary, I think that M. Thomas has well explained why the provincial governments of France were impotent to control the central authority, and were, at the same time, indisposed to co-operate with it, and were not, in fact, elements out of which a system of order and of good government could have spontaneously arisen.

But I am aware of no proof, nor of any argument to show, that the evils of these provincial constitutions were irremediable. I do not believe that the Duc de Bourgogne meditated building on such foundations until they had undergone the improvements which they both admitted and required. His policy was at once to adhere to the ancient usages and landmarks, and to improve them; and if he had lived, he would at least have attempted to meet the exigencies of "the great innovator, Time," by reformations, to be sanctioned and established by the people at large, both in the States of the various provinces, and in the States General of the kingdom at large.

I gather, however, from such acquaintance as I have with the modern literature of France, that M. Thomas expresses the general opinion of his contemporaries and fellow-countrymen, in commending Louis XIV. for reducing the provincial states to utter insignifi-

cance, instead of assigning a place for them in any enlarged basis of his government. Louis at present enjoys the praise, such as it is, of having extinguished, one after another, all the institutions of France, which, if not so overthrown by him, might, it is said, have enabled his dynasty to wage a successful war against the democratic usurpations of the 18th century. He is extolled as a great innovator in his own despite, as having well fulfilled his high destiny of contributing more than any other man to the preparation of that tabular rasa, on which modern philosophy was to inscribe so long a series of constitutions, charters, and schemes of revolutionary government.

To myself it appears a mere prejudice to deny, that France has derived from the subversion of her ancient monarchy secular advantages so vast, that even the incalculable price which she has paid for them may not, perhaps, have been excessive. Louis XIV. may be really entitled to the praise of having been the unconscious instrument of bringing those results to pass, but it is no very exalted commendation. Still less is it any good title to renown, if, as I believe, the motives by which he was guided were for the most part selfish, narrow, and contracted. Yet I would gladly, if possible, concur in the enthusiasm which his name even yet excites in the land over which he reigned so long. Although there be no national prejudices predisposing us to such feelings, and though there be many such prejudices indisposing us to them, there is yet in the image which presents itself to us, as we read his own writings, the memoirs of his friends, and the eulogies of his admirers, something which it is impossible not to admire, something which we must occasionally revere, and something which we must now and then even love. Yet, when

ceasing to think of the man as he lived among his kindred and his friends, we estimate the king as he governed the people subject to his power, a far more unfavourable judgment on him seems to me inevitable.

"L'Etat c'est moi" became at length no empty boast, but the arrogant avowal of a melancholy truth. In the lips of the sultan, or of the sophy, it would have been not only an exact, but a very reasonable, epitome of the constitution of his despotism. In those oriental autocracies, the science of government is reducible to the stern alternative, that the ruler must either strike off the heads of those who resist his will, or forfeit his own head. But the system of the French monarchy was never thus terribly simple. It was most remote from such simplicity in the days of Louis XIV. It was, on the contrary, a complex mechanism, of which each part was essential to the activity of the rest. It was a living body, the vitality of which consisted in the conservation and mutual support of all its integral members. To detach the Crown from its alliance with the States General, with the Provincial States, with the Parliament, the Municipalities, and the Magistracy, was to aim a suicidal blow at the Crown itself. They were the buttresses of the throne, which could not long stand erect after their overthrow. They were the bulwarks of the third dynasty, which was evidently foredoomed to perish as the inevitable consequence of their fall. That ancient and venerable aristocracy of privilege, which, by attracting to itself the homage of the people, was enabled in its turn to render to the sovereign a yet more important homage, could not be degraded by him without inducing his own degradation.

But pride and flattery blinded the eyes of Louis to these obvious and familiar truths. He would be the

one power in the state, and presumptuously imagined that such independence and isolation might be at once practicable and enduring. He had the presumption to invite literature and commerce to take shelter beneath that solitary rule, not perceiving that he was thus about to nourish the infancy of powers which, in their maturity, must annihilate the protector beneath whose shadow they had grown up. He had the temerity to rule, as well as to reign, in his own person, not foreseeing that the responsibility thus incurred must one day be fatal to the reverence, the admiration, and the terror, which formed the real basis of his authority. But, above all, he forgot that no dominion can at once be hereditary and despotic, —that although he might transmit to his descendants his own extreme and unlimited rights, he could not transmit to them the talents or the fortune necessary to render such rights effectual,—and that, according to the established laws of nature, an heir and successor to his Crown must ere long appear, who would want the capacity to sustain that burdensome inheritance, and who yet would be neither willing to abandon it, nor able with safety to attempt so hazardous a resignation.

LECTURE XXIV.

THE GROWTH OF THE FRENCH AND THE ENGLISH MONARCHIES COMPARED.

"How did it happen," asks Voltaire, "that, setting out from the same point of departure, the governments of England and of France arrived, at nearly the same time, at results as dissimilar as the constitution of Venice is unlike that of Morocco?"

The object of all my preceding lectures has been to answer that question so far as it relates to France. To answer it fully, in relation to England, would require me to make a still larger demand on your time than I have already made. The subject is far too extensive to be discussed accurately, or even intelligibly, in any brief space; and yet it is too important to be altogether passed over in silence. I propose therefore, at present, merely to lay before you what I regard as the substance of the answer to the problem which I have stated, reserving for some future time the more complete exposition and defence

of what I am about to offer. I must begin, however, by taking a very rapid retrospect of the ground which we have already traversed.

It was long doubtful whether the empire of the Western world would belong to the Roman or to the Gallic people. If, in the result of the protracted struggle between them, those whom Rome called barbarians had triumphed, our poets would now have been writing "Lays of Ancient Gaul," founded on a basis at once more romantic, and more certain, than the existing legends of Livy. For while the inhabitants of the Seven Hills were engaged in an obscure warfare with the petty towns and villages of Central Italy, the people of Gaul were extending their power over the western limits both of the Asiatic and of the European continents, and were leaving an indelible impression of their name and language, from Galatia, to Gallicia and Portugal—from Galway, to Galloway, and Galles or Wales. Of all the nations over whom triumphs had been celebrated at the capitol, none had herself won so many conquests, and none gave so large an accession of strength and glory to the all-conquering republic.

Gaul ceased to be a nation without becoming, in sentiment or in spirit, an integral member of the empire. Her civil institutions no longer imparted security, honour, or advantage to the citizens. Her agriculture withered away under fiscal oppression. Vast tracts of country were abandoned to barrenness. Large parts of her territory were cultivated not by freemen but by slaves. Her ancient language gave place to that of her conquerors, and the melancholy triumphs of despotism were incomplete only because the Church mitigated the calamities which even she was unable to avert.

Gaul, therefore, fell an easy prey to her German invaders. They settled in the south and in the east, to relieve rather than to augment her sufferings; but the barbarous Franks dispossessed the Gallic proprietors of the north and of the west of a large part of the soil, and, to a great extent, even of their personal freedom. Though the long-haired Merovings ruled from the Ebro to the Meuse, and over the whole of Western Germany, it was a nominal rather than a real dominion,—the ill-cemented alliance of a multitude of independent and half-savage chiefs, who, acknowledging the titular supremacy of the royal race, the supposed descendants of the gods, yielded them no effective obedience, nor any enduring attachment. The Merovingian kings discharged none of the essential attributes of sovereignty, but afforded the shelter of their name, and of their nominal power, to the growth of an aristocracy which, dividing among them the land and its inhabitants, prepared the way for the development of the feudal system.

From the centre of that aristocracy emerged a family, yet more distinguished by their hereditary genius than by their predominant authority. The third in succession of that lineage, Pepin le Bref, deprived the last of the Merovings of his titular crown. From Pepin it passed to Charlemagne — the most illustrious of all the founders of empire; if such glory be measured by the personal qualities of those by whom empire is acquired and maintained. For Charlemagne may be said to have been born prematurely, and to have belonged, by his character, by his tastes, and by his aspirations, to the 18th rather than to the 8th century. In the very depth of that night of ignorance, which was interposed between the ancient and the modern civilisation of Europe, he emulated

the profound policy of Augustus, and anticipated the soaring ambition of Napoleon.

But when the powerful grasp of Charlemagne might no longer hold together the dominions which he had won, they were rapidly dissolved into their original elements. Gaul, or, as she was henceforth called, France, first shook off her dependence on the German or foreign yoke, and then split into as many internal divisions as there were chieftains capable of exempting themselves from the control of the Carlovingian kings. A new territorial aristocracy divided the lands among them. Another family, destined, like that of Pepin, to be the founders of a new dynasty, arose in the midst of the consequent anarchical confusion. Robert the Strong transmitted to his descendants the duchy of France, until at length, in the person of Hugues Capet, they acquired the title of kings of the French people.

It was at first, however, little more than a title. The feudal oligarchs were the real sovereigns of France. They became the founders of a polity of which, till then, the world had seen no example, but of which, since then, the world has never ceased to feel the influence. The feudal system was a scheme of government which the subtle intellect of the Normans first subjected to positive rules founded upon general principles. It was a system derived from the combination of many concurrent elements, such as the patriarchal spirit of the old German tribes,—the territorial grants made by the leaders of the German invasions to their military chieftains,—the subdivision of those grants by them amongst their own followers,—the conditions of military service on which all such grants were made,—and the necessity which in that age constrained every one either to seek protection as a client, or to afford it as a patron.

It was, however, an iron despotism. A feudal peer or baron of France was, within his own fief, not merely an absolute monarch, but a monarch invested with powers which, in every other form of government, have been regarded as incompatible with each other. He could make war or peace with any other feudatory. He could make laws (with the consent of his chief vassals) for the government of his fief and of all persons sojourning within its limits. He was not subject to any law made without his own consent by the king, or by any other lawgivers. He was the supreme judge in all cases arising within his fief, and over all the inhabitants of it. He might coin and issue money in his own name, and at his own discretion. He was not liable to pay any tribute to the king, his suzerain, excepting only such dues as were imposed by the express conditions of the grant under which his feudal estate was holden. He was himself the suzerain of whom all his vassals held their lands. He was not only the lord of the freemen, but, to a great extent, the proprietor of the serfs, living within his domain.

I have already referred you to the works of Dr. Robertson, of Mr. Hallam, and of M. Guizot, for an explanation of this singular scheme of government, whether considered as a body of laws, or as a system of national policy, or as a code of moral sentiments. From those great writers you will collect, that no dominion less stern, and no maxims less arbitrary, could have prepared mankind in the Middle Ages for the happier condition which awaited them in more civilised, though distant, times. It formed the indispensable, though the terrible, discipline of generations which had been trained up in barbarism and in personal servitude. It was, therefore, destined to be

a state of transition, and to be itself subverted by changes sometimes abrupt, but, more usually, gradual and imperceptible. The history of France under the Capetian kings may be said to consist of the record of those changes. That history describes the successive stages of the protracted contest which terminated first in the triumph of the successors of Hugues Capet over the feudal confederation, and then in the subversion of the feudal system in all its principles, and in all its details, by the great revolutionary movements which marked the close of the 18th century.

It has, therefore, been my object hitherto, to consider each in order of the more considerable steps which led to this result, till the close of the reign of Louis XIV. With that view I attempted to explain, how the enfranchisement of the communes, and the consequent growth of the municipal institutions of France, strengthened the royal power, and called into existence the Tiers Etat as a counterpoise to the authority of the feudal aristocracy. I then considered how the Eastern crusades diminished the number of the feudal serfs and vassals — how they increased the strength and the number of the communes in which the feudal power had its natural and inveterate antagonists — how they tended to terminate the private wars by which the seigneurs asserted and maintained their authority — how they contributed to restore the Roman law in France, and, therefore, to subvert the customs which formed the basis of the feudal dominion — how they promoted a change in the judicial institutions by which the seigneurs administered the law — how they were often fatal to the ancient relations of the feudatories and the royal suzerains to each other — how they tended to impair the power of the feudal chiefs by changing the whole military

system of Europe—how they gave to the kings of France a new militia in the great military and religious orders—and how, by promoting commerce and literature, they nurtured the most deadly antagonists of the feudal despotism.

I next pointed out how the Albigensian crusades, coinciding with the annexation to the Crown of Normandy and Champagne, brought within the limits of the royal authority the countries extending from the Alps to the Pyrenees, and depressed, in the same proportion, the power of the seigniorial confederation.

The assumption by St. Louis of a legislative authority, at first co-ordinate with, and then superior to, that of the seigneurs of the royal domain, but which was ultimately destined to supersede the feudal right of legislation in all the fiefs of France, was the next subject of our inquiries.

I then endeavoured to show how the same monarch, by depriving his barons of the right of private war, and of trial by battle, laid the foundation of a new judicial system, by which the power, which they had so long exercised as judges in their respective fiefs, was gradually subverted.

Such were the principal, though not the only, causes to which I referred the triumph of the Capetian kings over the only body in the state which presented itself as a rival to their power. By means of that triumph they were enabled to acquire, or to assume, prerogatives so vast, as, in the result, to substitute a royal, for a feudal, despotism. Yet in France, as in England, there were many influences tending to counteract and to repel this usurpation. There, as here, the privileged orders, noble and sacerdotal, enjoyed great wealth, and still greater authority. The French, not less than the English, courts of justice were the

natural guardians of the rights and franchises of all the people of the realm. The municipal corporations of that kingdom, as of our own, possessed the means of defending the national liberties. The representatives of the French people were elected on a more popular suffrage, and on a wider basis, than the representatives of the people of England; and, like them, were convened to assist their sovereigns with their advice and with pecuniary grants. The States General claimed the power of the purse as distinctly as the House of Commons, and often maintained that power with equal firmness. The Calvinists of France were, in no respect, inferior to our own Puritans, in zeal for freedom of conscience, and, as its inevitable result, for constitutional freedom; and, in their active efforts to attain those blessings, they were unrivalled by their co-religionists in this country. And, finally, our national self-esteem will, I think, hardly persuade us that the pen was ever employed amongst our own ancestors by writers of more persuasive eloquence, or of more enlarged and liberal minds, than the great authors who wielded that mighty instrument of power amongst our neighbours. I therefore attempted, at some length, to explain why neither the privileged orders,—nor the judicial order,—nor the municipalities,—nor the States General,—nor the reformers,—nor the men of letters of France, were able to stem the current which bore her forwards to what Voltaire calls a resemblance to the government of Morocco.

My last general object has been to show, by some few illustrations, what that despotic authority really was, from the time when Henry IV. first acquired the undisputed possession of his throne, to the time when Louis XIV. conducted the government of France in person. If absolute power could ever be

fitly confided to mortal man, where could nobler depositaries of that high trust have been found than in the succession of great men who filled up that interval in the history of their country? What ruler of mankind was ever gifted with a spirit more genial, or with views more comprehensive, than those of Henry IV?—or with an integrity and a patriotism more noble than that of Sully?—or with an energy of will superior to that of Richelieu?—or with subtlety more profound than that of Mazarin?—or with a zeal and activity surpassing that of Colbert?—or with greater decision of character than Louvois?—or with a majesty transcending that of Louis XIV? And yet, what were the results of so much genius and intellectual power when entrusted with political powers so vast and unrestricted? The favourable result was to add to the greatness of France, and to give birth to some undying traditions, pointing to her still more extensive aggrandisement. The unfavourable results were, to produce every possible variety of internal, and of external, misgovernment—to promote wars more sanguinary than had ever before been waged between Christian nations—to produce a waste of treasure so vast, that the simple truth seems fabulous—to excite a protracted civil war—to create artificial famines by absurd commercial restrictions in a country blessed beyond all other European states with a fertile soil, and a genial climate—to kindle persecutions which altogether eclipse, in their enormity, those to which the early Christians were subjected by the emperors of Rome—to subject the territories of the belligerent neighbours of France to desolations for a comparison to which we must look back to the histories of the Huns and the Vandals—and to corrupt the moral sense of the people by the

exhibition at the court of their sovereigns of a profligacy of manners resembling that of an Asiatic, rather than that of an European, monarchy.

It would be easy, but it would hardly be useful, to enlarge the catalogue of the calamities in which France was involved by the absolute dominion to which her rulers had been conducted, first, by their conquest over their feudal antagonists, and then, by the inability of the aristocratic, the judicial, the municipal, the representative, the religious, and the literary institutions of the kingdom to balance, and to restrain their power. It is enough if we learn to regard such despotism with irreconcilable aversion, and to study with diligence, and to remember with gratitude, the causes to which we are indebted for our own hereditary exemption from it.

Such being the answer which I have already attempted to return to Voltaire's question, so far as it relates to France, I pass on to inquire what were the chief causes which, during the same period, conducted our own land to the possession of those constitutional franchises of which, at the present hour, we are still the undisputed inheritors? It is not, I confess, without some reluctance, that I enter on topics at all times so trite and so familiar, and which, in very recent times, have been discussed by Mr. Hallam, and by M. Guizot, and more especially by Sir Francis Palgrave, with such a prodigality of learning, and in so rich and measured a flow of judicial eloquence. Yet I may not forget, that misgivings similar to these would obstruct no small part of all our academical studies — that all elementary teaching must, to a great extent, be but the repetition of common-places — that the history of our national liberties has for us an interest which may well be

regarded as inexhaustible — that it has aspects almost as numerous, and as distinguishable from each other, as are the minds by which it is contemplated — and that even they who are most unworthy to aspire to an equality, or to a competition, with the great authors I have mentioned, may at least illustrate and verify their conclusions, and may even venture occasionally to dispute and to correct them.

While the Goths, the Burgundians, and the Franks were effecting the conquest and the occupation of Gaul, the Saxons were overrunning the whole of Great Britain south of the Grampians. Their national name, at first confined to the inhabitants of the territories between the Elbe and the Eyder, progressively embraced all the tribes or peoples dwelling between the Weser, the Ems, and the Rhine. It was not till the middle of the 5th century that they first appeared in force in this island; but, within 150 years from that time, they had founded here the eight kingdoms of Kent, Sussex, Wessex, Essex, East Anglia, Bernecia, Deira, and Mercia. Gradually retreating before them, a large part of the British or Celtic natives of the soil took refuge in the western mountains; or, crossing the Channel, established themselves on the Armorican peninsula, which has ever since borne from them the name of Bretagne.

The theory that the whole of the ancient British population were driven by their conquerors, either into Wales or into Bretagne, rests chiefly, perhaps exclusively, on the indisputable fact, that, not long after the Conquest, the Celtic had been entirely superseded by the German language. For, with the exception of some few of the more prominent natural features of our country, such as our broader rivers and loftier mountains, the name of almost every

object which meets the eye, from the Grampians to the South Downs, from the Severn to the eastern ocean, is derived from the Saxon tongue. Here and there some local vestiges of the British, Roman, or Scandinavian nomenclatures perpetuate the memory of still earlier, or still later, vicissitudes of our national fortunes; but our villages, our towns, our hundreds, and our counties—the animals which depasture our fields—the birds native to our climate—the indigenous plants which we cultivate—the products of our mines—our common trades and mechanical arts—the utensils we employ in them—the members of our bodies—the ordinary actions of our lives—and whatever is idiomatic, pungent, and forcible in our common speech, all bear their concurrent testimony to the fact, that we descend from those with whom the language of Saxony was once vernacular. With less distinctness, indeed, yet with no real doubt, our laws and our institutions attest the same genealogy.

I reject, however, as altogether improbable and gratuitous, the hypothesis of the exile into Wales or Brittany, of the whole of the native British population who escaped the sword of the German conquerors. A large proportion of them were probably included in that great body of slaves, prædial and domestic, of whom we meet with such frequent mention in the annals of those times. That in that servitude they were tardily, but effectually, exterminated, will seem incredible to no one who is aware how, even in our own days, the aboriginal races in all newly discovered territories waste away, and at length disappear in the presence of their more hardy, enterprising, and civilised invaders. Be this as it may, it is at least clear, that, during five successive centuries, the lowlands of our island were chiefly

peopled, and were exclusively governed, by members of the great Teutonic family. In France, throughout the same period, there was a vast numerical preponderance of the Gallic, or Romano-Gallic, over the Teutonic element of society. What was the effect of the slow and imperfect fusion of the two races in that kingdom, I have attempted, in a former lecture, to explain. What was the effect of the undisturbed development of the German habits of thought and action in our own land, it remains for us to inquire.

I have already avowed my belief, that to each of the nations of the earth belongs, by a divine decree, a distinctive character adapted to the peculiar office assigned to each, in the great and comprehensive system of human affairs. Thus to France was appointed, by the Supreme Ruler of mankind, the duty of civilising and humanising the European world. To England it has been given to guide all other states to excellence in the practical arts of life, to commercial wealth, to political wisdom, and to spiritual liberty. But to Germany was delegated the highest and the noblest trust which has been committed to any people since the Hebrews, the Greeks, and the Romans fulfilled their respective commissions of imparting to our race the blessings of religion, of learning, and of law. For, in Germany, we revere the prolific mother of nations, the reformer of a corrupted Christianity, and the conservator of the liberties and independence of the European commonwealth. Weakened as she has been in defensive, as well as in aggressive, war, by the division of her territory into so many separate states, yet in that very weakness she has found her strength, in the unambitious but beneficent career which, by the prescient will of the Creator himself, she was destined to pursue. The

fathers of some of the most aged amongst us witnessed her first assumption of her rank and proper station in the republic of letters; and we ourselves are witnesses how, in that comparatively new region of national prowess, she has exhibited the same indestructible character which, more than a thousand years ago, enabled her to lay in this island the basis of a government, of which (if our posterity be true to their trust) another thousand years will scarcely witness the subversion. That England has her patrimony on the seas, France on the land, and Germany in the clouds, is a sarcasm at which a German may well afford to smile. For reverence in the contemplation of whatever is elevated, and imagination in the embellishment of whatever is beautiful, and tenderness in cherishing whatever is lovely, and patience in the pursuit of the most recondite truths, and courage in the avowal of every deliberate conviction, and charity in tolerating every form of honest dissent — these are now, as they have ever been, the vital elements of the Teutonic mind. They may, indeed, not seldom have given birth to an unmeaning mysticism, to visionary hopes, and to dangerous errors. Yet, from their remotest ancestry, the Germans have received these gifts as their best and most enduring inheritance; and, by the exercise and the influence of them, they impressed upon our own ancestral constitution much of that peculiar character which it retains to the present hour.

"By the word constitution," says Lord Bolingbroke, "we mean, whenever we speak with propriety and exactness, the assemblage of laws, institutions, and customs, derived from certain fixed principles of reason, directed to certain fixed objects of public good, that compose the general system by which the

community hath agreed to be governed." Assuming the accuracy of this definition, I infer from it, that we must seek the constitution of any commonwealth, and, therefore, of our own, not in the organic structure of its government, but in the living spirit by which it is habitually animated; not in a rigid analysis of the rights and the functions of the various orders of the citizens, so much as in the primæval tendencies, the cherished habits, and the venerated maxims by which the national polity has been moulded and directed. I, therefore, proceed to inquire, What are those principles of our English monarchy, which, having been first established by our Anglo-Saxon progenitors, have, from their age to our own, retained among us a perennial and an undisputed dominion?

First, then, whether we listen to the invectives of our neighbours, or to the taunts of some of the most eloquent, though not, I think, the wisest of our fellow-countrymen, we are required to condemn and to subvert those hereditary distinctions which elevate some, and depress the rest, of the ranks of society amongst us. Declining this, and all the other controversies of our age, I limit myself to the statement and the proof of the fact, that an aristocracy of birth has ever been among the most active elements of our constitutional polity.

The Anglo-Saxon people were divided into the five classes of kings, nobles, vavasours, ceorls, and slaves —ranks transmitted by inheritance, from one generation to another, and which became the salient fountains of the whole body of our national laws, of our most cherished rights, and of our most popular privileges.

First in order, in this political hierarchy, was what,

for want of a more appropriate word, may be called the Royal Caste. Over each of the component kingdoms of the Heptarchy, or, as it ought to be called, the Octarchy, reigned a monarch, who was designated sometimes as the Kyning, and sometimes as the Ealderman. In the belief of his subjects, he was one of the descendants of Odin or Woden, whose name, under various modifications, was revered from the shores of the polar sea to the eastern verge of the Caucasian mountains. For that reason, the descent of the crown was strictly limited to the royal, or rather to the sacred, line. Yet it was not invariably a lineal descent. The collateral was not seldom preferred to the direct heir—the brother, for example, to the son of the last Kyning.

But, in the persons of Athelstane and his successors, the Anglo-Saxon realms were united into one confederation, though not incorporated into one kingdom. Over these confederate states reigned a sovereign, to whom his people gave the name of Brettwalda —that is, the wielder or ruler of Britain. Thus Athelstane was Brettwalda of the whole of Albion. The men of Kent and the men of Sussex were alike his subjects; but they were not fellow-citizens. He was not only the king of eight adjacent and rival states, but was also the mediator between them. To maintain the principle and the permanency of this federal union, the powers of the Brettwalda over each member of it were, therefore, greater than the powers of any one of the Ealdermen, or Kynings, in his own dominion; just (to use a very modern illustration), as the Congress of the United States has higher legislative functions, and, as their supreme court, has higher judicial functions throughout the whole republic, than the legislatures, or than the tribunals, of the

component states possess within their several jurisdictions.

Next in rank in the Anglo-Saxon commonwealth were the nobles—designated either as Earls or Thanes. That dignity, when combined with a certain extent and description of territorial property, carried with it high powers, both civil and military. Men of noble birth, when destitute of such property, were also destitute of any political power. But they had privileges from which the inferior members of society were excluded. Thus, even the monk in his cloister, and the priest in his cathedral (if of noble lineage), claimed and received the honours due to their descent. The word Vavasours, though of later origin, best designates this part of the Anglo-Saxon society.

To the nobles succeeded the Ceorls, or Commons of the realm. Though liable to many burdensome obligations, resulting from the relation in which they stood to their earls or lords, they were regarded by others, and by themselves, as freemen. They corresponded to the class which we now call the Yeomanry, or to the Tiers Etat of France.

All freemen, who were not themselves lords, were bound to live in subjection to some lord, to whom they swore fealty, and whose banner they followed in war. But the vavasour might choose his own lord, that is, he might attach, or, as it was called, commend, himself to any lord who would accept his homage. The ceorl, on the other hand, was a tenant attached to a particular lordship, on which he was required to live, and where he was bound to render to his lord certain fixed services, either personal or pecuniary. Yet the ceorl had often an usufructuary title to some definite amount of land within the precincts of the lordship. From that home he could not be ejected;

and if he possessed the means of purchasing a discharge from his adscription or attachment to the soil, the lord could not refuse so to enfranchise him. A ceorl, destitute of such a home, was compelled to find a master who would accept him as a labourer and as an inmate in his household.

These distinctions of rank among freemen were not, however, indelible. A merchant who had thrice crossed the sea at his own expense, obtained the dignity of a thane. A ceorl who could acquire, in his own right, five hydes of land, ascended to the same rank. His descendants, in the third generation, if retaining the land, were considered as vavasours, that is, as men of gentle blood and kindred, and as entitled to all the privileges of noble birth.

Finally. The slave, who filled the lowest station in the Anglo-Saxon community, was *res* not *persona*, and as destitute of all political rights and franchises as the bullocks with whom he laboured. Such having been the divisions of society among the Anglo-Saxons, I observe,

Secondly, that in their age, as in our own, it was a principle of the constitution of this kingdom, that the powers of the state should, as little as possible, be combined in a central government, and should, as much as possible, be distributed amongst the provincial or local authorities; and that this rule was especially observed regarding the administration of justice.

In all modern kingdoms sovereignty is territorial. In all the mediæval kingdoms it was patriarchal. *We* consider all men as the subjects of Him who reigns over their settled place of abode. Our German forefathers considered all men as subject to the monarch of the tribe or confederacy within which they were

born. After the tribe had become sedentary, they still gathered round their chieftain, and acknowledged his dominion. In this island his domain was called a town or township,—a word of which the Norman term manor has since taken the place. The chieftain was the proprietor of the whole of that domain. He was the actual possessor only of a part of it; the rest was granted to his followers as tenants, either for their lives or for other terms; or was left as open fields or commons, of which the lord and his tenants had a kind of joint occupation.

In each township the lord, with the concurrence of his tenants, held courts of justice, then called townmotes, which exist among us at the present hour, under the name of courts leet, or courts baron. The conservation of the public peace was entrusted to the inhabitants of the township collectively. An officer, called the townreeve, appointed by the lord, and four good and lawful men of the township, elected by the inhabitants, represented it at the folkmote, or local assembly of the hundred.

The court of the hundred, or folkmote, was composed of all the lords and thanes whose townships were included within that district,—of the townreeve and four men already mentioned, representing every such township,—of the bishop of the diocese,—and of an earl, who acted as the president of the assembly. The folkmote was at once a court of justice (penal and civil) for the hundred, and a meeting for attesting and perpetuating the memory of a variety of acts, of which, in those days, no written record could be made. Such, for example, were the sale of lands, the payment for them, the enfranchisement of serfs, and the like.

Next in the ascending scale of the local courts of

the Anglo-Saxons were the shiremotes, or county courts. Our English counties have their origin from two sources. Some of them are ancient kingdoms reduced to the rank of provinces; others are the dismemberments of such kingdoms. In either case the shire was placed under the authority of an earl. In each shire two shiremotes were holden annually. Sometimes those bodies acted as ecclesiastical synods, under the presidency of the bishop; sometimes as secular courts, under the presidency of the earl, or of the shirereeve, his deputy. The shiremote was the grand inquest of the county. Every hundred was represented there by twelve men, and each township by the townreeve and the four men already mentioned. It was the office of such attendants, or representatives, to present to the court the grievances of their respective hundreds or townships. It was the office of the court to take cognisance of all such grievances, — of all crimes committed within the county, — of all complaints of the abuse of power by any subordinate officers, — and of all appeals from the judgments of the township or the hundred courts. Such having been the distribution of political and of judicial powers in the Anglo-Saxon kingdom, I observe,

Thirdly, that in that, as in all subsequent ages, the Church of England and the realm of England were co-extensive, — that (in theory at least) each embraced, within its appropriate sphere, all the people of England, — and that the ecclesiastical and civil states were intimately allied or united to each other. So intimate, indeed, was that union, that each kingdom of the Octarchy constituted a distinct diocese, and every such diocese was considered as a single parish, of which the bishop was the incumbent.

By him presbyters were appointed to officiate in the various districts, civic or rural; and by him the annual revenues of the see were appropriated, first, for the maintenance of divine service; then for the relief of the poor; and, finally, for the support of the clergy. The clerks and the laymen then lived under the same code, civil and penal; and, though the exposition of the faith was considered as the peculiar province of synods, the regulation and enforcement of ecclesiastical discipline belonged to the temporal legislature and tribunals. The king was the patron of all vacant bishoprics, and granted them, by royal writs or charters, without either the previous concurrence of the clergy, or the subsequent sanction of the pope. If the State thus encroached on the province of the Church, the Church, in turn, assumed some of the functions of the temporal government. The clerical order in those times were in the exclusive possession of the art of writing, and, therefore, of many of the higher secular offices. As by them all royal charters were prepared and transcribed, so they were the keepers or depositaries of them. To the clergy, also, it thus belonged to devise and issue those royal mandates, or writs, which then, as now, were the foundation of all civil actions. Hence arose the Chancery, or Officina Brevium; and hence, also, was chiefly derived that peculiarity of the English judicial system,—the jurisdiction of a judge of equity, whose province it is to supply the defects, and to mitigate the rigour of the ordinary administration of justice.

Fourthly. I observe that, from the era of our earliest Anglo-Saxon records, England has never acknowledged any other than a monarchical government. In the Anglo-Saxon king, or Brettwalda, re-

sided in theory (if not in fact) all the powers of the state, and from him flowed, or were supposed to flow, all offices and dignities subordinate to his own.

Thus, he was in all causes the great and the ultimate judge. As the supreme lord or suzerain of the realm, all his thanes were amenable to his judicial authority. As commander-in-chief of the military forces of the state, all offences committed *sub vexillâ* came within his cognisance. As sovereign of all the denizens of his kingdom, he punished all offences accompanied by violence or rapine;—remedied the defects of the law which he administered;—supplied the omissions of it when it was silent;—infused energy into the administration of it when it was feeble,—and mitigated the severity of it when it was oppressive or burdensome. As judge of appeal, he afforded redress to any suitor who had sought it in vain in the hundred or county courts. As owner of the four great roads which traversed the island, from east to west, and from north to south, he had a special care of all who travelled along them; and crimes committed on the king's highway thus came to be regarded as falling especially within the jurisdiction of the king.

His presence, his vicinity, or his express grant, carried with it a special protection, which was called the king's peace. It was a privilege which always prevailed throughout a circle of which his mansion was the centre, and of which, for some mystic reason, the radius measured three miles, added to three furlongs, three acre breadths, nine feet, nine palms, and three barleycorns.

On his coronation, and at the three great festivals of the Church, the king's peace was extended throughout the whole realm. All violations of it were considered as injuries to the king himself, and

rendered the transgressor amenable immediately to his penal jurisdiction.

The judicial powers thus vested in the Brettwalda were exercised by him in person. Thus Edgar made two judicial circuits in each year, and Canute appears to have observed the same practice. Such royal visitations were, indeed, indispensable at a time when each of the component states, or the kingdom of Britain, still retained laws and customs peculiar to itself, and was under the rule of earls or viceroys, whose abuse of power could be arrested by no other means.

But the Anglo-Saxon king, or Brettwalda, had many other than these judicial prerogatives. He was the patron of all the dignities and offices of his government, appointing, and at his pleasure displacing, the aldermen, earls, thanes, sheriffs, heretarchs, and all other great functionaries, civil or military.

He was in possession of large revenues. His royal domains were nearly equal to the domains of all his principal chieftains combined together. He received customs at every seaport, and tolls in all open markets. He was entitled to money payments from every incorporated city or borough, in commutation of the services due to him from the citizens. Heriots were rendered to him on the death of all of his thanes, and to him were paid the forfeitures imposed on offenders in various cases of conviction from crimes.

But his highest prerogative was that of legislation, which, however, he exercised in concurrence with the wittenagemote. For,

Fifthly, I observe that, even in that remote age, England was never destitute of assemblies, meeting under the presidency of the king of England, for the enactment and promulgation of laws.

Each of the component kingdoms of the Anglo-Saxon monarchy had a separate wittenagemote, or council of the wise. Probably this may in each have been but another name for the shiremote, or county court, already mentioned. But concurrently with them the Brettwalda, or king of Britain, held a general wittenagemote, or diet, of the kingdom at large. At every such assembly he presented himself to his subjects in all the splendour of royalty. There also appeared all the prelates of the realm, the ealdermen, the earls, and the thanes, of each of the states, or minor kingdoms, or shires, over which he was supreme; and all the high officers of his government, both lay and clerical. In this supreme wittenagemote laws were enacted in the name of the Brettwalda. In terms, at least, the authority of them was co-extensive with the limits of his dominions. But, in fact, the acceptance of such laws, by what may be called the local or inferior legislatures, was essential to their validity within the precincts of each. Thus we learn that the laws of Edgar were long rejected in Mercia, those of Athelstane in Kent, and those of Canute in Northumberland.

But the wittenagemote was not merely a legislature. They constituted, also, a court of criminal jurisdiction, and especially in cases in which an accusation, or, as we should now say, an impeachment, was preferred against any alderman or earl, or against any thane, who was an immediate vassal of the Crown.

The wittenagemote possessed, also, much of the character of a congress of independent powers, in which those whom we should describe as the great vassals of the Crown deliberated on all questions affecting their respective states or communities, and entered

into compacts for raising money, or for the adoption of other measures required by the exigencies of the whole Anglo-Saxon commonwealth.

Mr. Sharon Turner has laboured to prove that the wittenagemote included members holding neither office nor dignity, but who appeared there as representatives of the absent vassals or citizens. He is contradicted on what appear to me conclusive grounds, by authorities more recent, and indeed much higher, than his own; and especially by Dr. Lingard and by Sir Francis Palgrave. It must, indeed, be confessed, that all inquiries into the composition, the rights, the powers, and the modes of procedure of this great assembly, are involved in an obscurity which the most profound research, the ripest learning, and the keenest subtlety of our most eminent antiquarians has not been able altogether to dispel. Yet no fact can be more exempt from reasonable doubt than that, during nearly two centuries before the Norman Conquest, a national assembly, comprising such dignitaries, and habitually exercising such functions as I have mentioned, formed, under the Anglo-Saxon kings, one great element of our national government and constitution.

Such were the main fundamental principles of the Anglo-Saxon constitution — principles which may, with ease, be dogmatically stated, but which can hardly be understood aright except as they are illustrated by the laws, the arts, the manners, and the literature of the Anglo-Saxon people. What these were may be learnt from Mr. Sharon Turner, of whom M. Guizot says that he has diligently collected an abundance of facts, but possesses few ideas. If that censure were better founded than it really is, it would not, perhaps, derogate much from the esteem

in which that wise and amiable writer is held by us, his fellow-countrymen. For we are accustomed to think that history and philosophy have each their own appropriate spheres—that each should inform and be infused into the other, not confounded with it—and that a complete, luminous, and accurate narrative of events may reasonably be preferred by an historian to the most subtle explication of their connecting principles.

If Mr. Sharon Turner's speculative wisdom be not very redundant, it is at least copious enough to establish the fact, that Teutonic ideas, and Teutonic habits, were planted by the Saxons in England, as they had been by the Goths, the Burgundians, and the Franks in France. But the growth of those ideas and habits was more active here than there, and the development of them far more complete; for, in this island, the German race, alloyed by no foreign admixture (the Danes were but another branch of the great Saxon family), had, long before the Norman invasion, impressed upon our people a character at once peculiar, indigenous, and indestructible. From them our fathers' fathers inherited, and have transmitted to our own generation, a body of opinions, of maxims, and of moral sentiments, in which may be found for their polity and for our polity, a common root, and origin, and lineage. That their Brettwalda and our Queen—their earls and thanes and our nobility—their shiremotes and our circuit courts—their wittenagemote and our parliament, were so many constituted authorities identical in all things except in the epochs in which they flourished, and in the names by which they were designated,—is, indeed, only one of those pleasant dreams which haunt and animate the antiquarian as

he treads his dry and dusty path. But that, under the widest diversities of forms, there is yet much real sameness of substance between the institutions of England as they formerly existed in the 9th, and as they actually exist in the 19th century, is a fact susceptible of the clearest proof, and replete with the deepest interest. Nor is the cause of this unbroken continuity doubtful or obscure. Beyond all Western nations, the Germans possess that immutability of character and of habits by which the Oriental races are distinguished; but with the difference that, in the East, an abject superstition and an inert passiveness —in Germany, a solemn imagination—has ever attached the living to the dead, and to those who are yet to live. Serious, dutiful, and meditative, they inhabited this island a thousand years ago, as they inhabit their own fatherland now, in patriarchal thoughtfulness, dwelling less in the passing hour than in the generations which are yet to come, and in the generations which have long since passed away. I will attempt, in the fewest possible words, to show how great is the conformity between the living spirit of the institutions which they created, and to which I have already referred, and that of the institutions under which we actually live.

1st, then, that wide inequality between the different ranks and orders of our people which distinguishes our nation at the present day, has been characteristic of it since the days of Edgar and of Athelstane. The aristocratic spirit has, at all times, pervaded and animated the English commonwealth; but not the aristocracy of birth alone. In the times of the Brettwaldas, successful merit might rise to the privileges of noble descent as freely as in those of Elizabeth

or of Victoria. Political power was, indeed, never dissociated from property. The law which exacts from every member of the House of Commons a certain proprietary qualification in land, is but the republication, in a new form, of a law which was in force at the shiremotes and at the wittenagemotes of our remote progenitors; for to them it was known by a natural sagacity, as it is known to us by a wider experience, that power and property, if not bound together in a strict alliance, will be arrayed against each other in a deadly hostility. Yet power in the state, and the advantages which such power conveys, have never been confined to a single caste amongst us. It was the policy which our Saxon ancestors have transmitted to ourselves, to render such honours a prize for which all might contend, not an exclusive enjoyment in which a few might luxuriate. They aimed at an equality of rights, not at an equality of conditions. They sought to combine all ranks of free men into one body, not by depressing the noble to the level of the ignoble, but by enabling all men to acquire, by desert and industry, the benefits denied to them by fortune and by parentage. An untutored wisdom taught them that this is the one true and secure equality—the only structure of the social system by which the highest social qualities can be permanently called into exercise for the general good —the single polity which affords an adequate scope for dutifulness, for energy, and for hope in those who aspire to rise; for vigilance, for self-improvement, for condescension, and for sympathy in those who have inherited from their fathers a position on he high places of the earth.

'2. With the exception of the years which elapsed between the death of the first and the restoration of

the second Charles, England has, during more than a thousand years, been under the rule of hereditary monarchs, who either in fact, or in theory have wielded all the powers, and dispensed all the honours of the state. The prerogatives which our present sovereign exercises, through the agency of responsible advisers, are her inheritance from the Brettwaldas, who, as we have seen, exercised them in their own persons. If, at this day, fleets and armies are raised and commanded in the royal name—if all property, dedicated to public uses, is now vested in the Crown—if every stage of every suit or action is conducted by the queen's judicial officers, in obedience to the queen's writs or mandates—if, by her alone, war can be made, and peace restored—if all treaties with foreign powers be concluded only in her name—if at her pleasure, and under her great seal, all patents of nobility, and all grants of the higher offices of the state, are issued—if, by her, the legislature is summoned, prorogued, and dissolved—and if all our laws are enacted, not by the three estates of the realm, but by her majesty, with the advice and consent of those estates assembled in parliament—all these rights or usages form a part of the patrimony of the English Crown, which has descended upon her who wears it now, through each of the six dynasties by whom successively it has been worn. Such usages are, indeed, derided as so many obsolete legal fictions, by certain scoffers amongst us, who unceremoniously, if not irreverently, consign all such fictions to the limbo of imposture and of cant, or, in more fashionable phrase, of shams. Those monsters of the modern imagination have, it must be confessed, achieved great triumphs; but, perhaps, none so great as their entire subjugation of the very writers who have thus

most loudly proclaimed war against them, seeing that they are themselves, of all men, the most helpless slaves of cant, if thereby be meant the habitual substitution of certain favourite phrases for real and definite meanings. Wiser, though less witty, men will regard these fictions of our constitution as amongst its most sacred and invaluable elements. They survive, not as so many vain traditions of worn-out principles—not as the empty shadows of departed realities—but as the grave, though cautious, expression of living truths. They are a homage rendered to hoar antiquity, indeed, but rendered also to prerogatives which, though dormant, are not extinct. They are the records of exigencies which have arisen, and of exigencies which may yet arise, when, for the conservation of society at large, the prerogatives of the English Crown may be called into exercise in all their primæval force, and in all their still inherent vitality. In the meantime, the theory which recognises and does homage to these dormant prerogatives is not, in truth (as our facetious satirists imagine), merely fictitious. All who have studied the government of our land, not in books merely, or in magazines and newspapers, but from a close personal observation of it, will attest, that the personal powers of the sovereign of England in the nineteenth century, tempered as they are by the comities of our age, and modified as they are by the forms in use amongst us, are yet powers not nominal, but real; arduous enough to exercise the highest intellect, and large enough to satisfy the aspirations of the most ardent beneficence.

3. The monarchy of the ancient Brettwalda, as of our modern King, was a limited monarchy. From

the days of Alfred and of Athelstane to these days, our sovereigns have reigned (every lover of our national liberties, if wise, will acknowledge that they have reigned) by divine right. There is a deep and a generous philosophy, as well as a more than human wisdom, in the apostolic canon, that "the powers which be are ordained of God,"—the powers symbolised, whether by the staff of the constable, or by the crown of the monarch. The servile maxims for which that doctrine has been made the pretext, are not legitimate deductions from it. They proceed on a total misapprehension of its real meaning. That meaning is, that all human power is indissolubly connected with a corresponding responsibility both to God as its author, and to man as the subject of it. In this spirit it was that, long before and long after the Norman Conquest, the coronation of our kings was regarded, not as an empty pageant, but as an act strictly essential to the assumption and use of their royal authority. For, at that solemn ceremony, a sacramental unction was (at least) supposed to impart to the English king a sacerdotal character, as the vicegerent amongst men of the King of kings. That sacred chrism rendered him, at least in popular belief, the anointed of the Lord; but it also rendered him, in popular belief, and often in his own, amenable to those inevitable penalties which the Supreme Ruler of the world would inflict, or would sanction, if the king should violate the oath which he then took before his assembled people, to govern them in justice and in mercy.

4. But the limitation of the power of our kings, from the earliest to the latest times, has rested on a surer sanction than any oath, however solemn.

To repeat what I have already had occasion to say on that subject in a preceding lecture, "our land has ever lived under the dominion of law. By that power the physical force of the many, the formidable influence of the few, and the arbitrary will of the monarch, have ever been controlled with more or less of energy and of success. This dominion of the law was exercised in the time of our Saxon progenitors in the folkmotes, the shiremotes, and the wittenagemotes; in our own times, in our courts of justice, and in our high court of parliament. During more than a thousand years, our legal tribunals have been interposed between the various orders of the state, to vindicate the rights, and to arrest the encroachments of them all. Throughout that long course of ages those legal sanctuaries have been at once the bulwarks of order, and the strongholds of liberty, in England; and to them it is to be ascribed that the English Parliaments have never fallen, as the Cortes of Spain fell, or as the States General of France silently disappeared."

5. Since the age when England was governed by the House of Cerdic to the age in which the sceptre passed to the House of Brunswick, there has never been a period in which the powers of the English Crown have not been divided, balanced, and controlled, by the co-ordinate powers of the English legislature. No sovereign has ever sat on the throne of this realm except in virtue of a title created by some preceding enactment, or sanctioned by some subsequent recognition of the national legislature. No such sovereign has ever established a right to inscribe among our laws, edicts promulgated in the exercise of his own unaided prerogative. There

never was a time when the lawgivers of our land were not armed with privileges, judicial and administrative, for their safeguard in the free discharge of that pre-eminent franchise.

There is, indeed, a loose and popular impression, that the Norman Conquest swept away all the institutions of the Anglo-Saxons, and among them the wittenagemote, substituting no other legislative body in its place. It is easy to detect the causes of that belief. In no other European history do we meet with any conquest which effected so complete, so abrupt, and so lasting a change in the state and fortunes of the conquered people. It has even become the era of our insular chronology; and, for reasons which I cannot now pause to explain, has gone far to obliterate the memory and the records of our earlier political constitution. Yet no fact admits of readier, or of more complete, proof, than that all the most important of the legal customs, and legal principles, and national sentiments of England beneath her Brettwaldas, were yet in force in England beneath William the Norman and his descendants to the fourth generation. New names, Norman or Latin, were indeed, in many cases, substituted for the Saxon titles. Thus to the wittenagemote succeeded the *curia regis*. But the two were really identical, though nominally distinct. For the most complete and triumphant proof of that fact, I would refer to a dissertation (obviously from the pen of the very learned Sir Francis Palgrave) which is to be found in the sixty-ninth number of the Edinburgh Review. It will enable any student to satisfy himself, that the parliament in which we and our forefathers have so long and so justly gloried, may be traced, through a

long but unbroken genealogy, back to the Saxon assemblies which hailed the Confessor, and Canute, and Edgar, as their kings.

For the history of our commonwealth from the earliest epoch to our own, is that of a people looking before and after, whose retrospect is unwearied, that their progress may be at once constant and secure. Amidst all the errors, and all the crimes, and all the miseries, which have disgraced and burdened our land, it has ever cherished reverence for the traditions, for the achievements, for the struggles, and for the sufferings, of preceding generations, — reverence for the church in which they worshipped, for the crown which they honoured, for the tribunals which they obeyed, and for the legislature which, at much cost of blood, and toil, and treasure, they perpetuated — reverence for the laws which they transmitted as a patrimony to their descendants — and reverence for the liberties which they bequeathed as a birthright to ourselves. Nor has our land ever yet been wanting in hope; in a hope sustained by an unfaltering faith in the expansive power of those great principles, of which the truth has been tried by the severest tests, and has been proved alike in our good and in our evil fortunes. To improve, not to subvert — to adapt our institutions to the successive exigencies to which Time has given birth — to encounter and subdue evils, real and remediable, not evils imaginary, or inherent in the indestructible conditions of all human society — to abandon to the schools all Utopian reveries — to regard the constitution of the realm not as the absolute property of any one generation of men, but as a sacred trust for which each gene-

ration is in turn responsible — such (except during the Cromwellian usurpation) have been the invariable maxims of the English monarchy during a period exceeding that which intervened between the foundation and the extinction of the power of Rome.

To the question of Voltaire then, Why has England so long and so successfully maintained her free government, and her free institutions? I answer, because England is still, as she has always been, German; because her national franchises are the spontaneous and legitimate fruit of her national character; of that character, dutiful, serious, persevering, reverential, and hopeful, which has been transmitted to us from our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, and which it now remains for us to transmit to our remotest descendants.

Far different from this is the answer returned by M. Guizot in his "Essai des Causes de l'Etablissement du Gouvernement Représentatif en Angleterre." The powers of that great writer were never exhibited with greater felicity than in that remarkable treatise, in which he traces the liberties of England to the relative positions into which the Conquest brought the Norman people and government on the one hand, and the Saxon people and nobles on the other hand. Luminous and comprehensive as is that commentary on our annals, I think it essentially defective, for the reasons which I have already mentioned; and even inaccurate, for reasons which the time at my command will not now allow me to mention. Yet to any one who wishes to pursue the inquiry which I proposed at the outset of this lecture, it would be impossible to recommend any guide who could be followed with greater confidence, with more advantage, or with equal pleasure.

Here, then, I close the Lectures which it will be in my power to address to you on the History of France during the present academical term. If the necessary time and opportunity shall be allowed to me, I hope, in a future term, to complete them by a review of the Causes of the Decline and Fall of the French Monarchy at the Revolution of 1789.

THE END.

LONDON:
SPOTTISWOODES and SHAW,
New-street-Square.

00029549

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 April, 2016